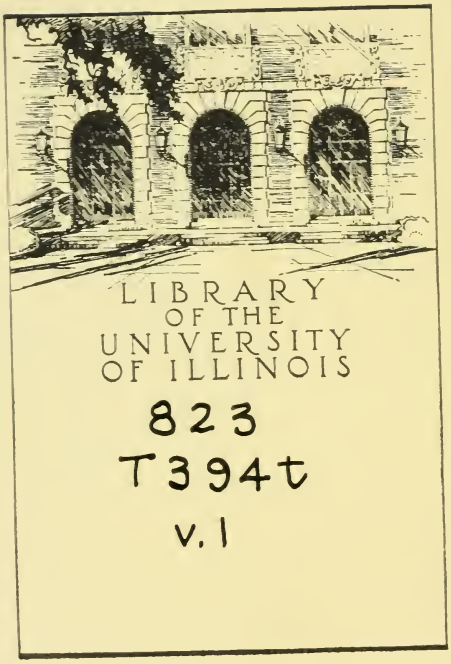
LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS
823
T394t
v.1

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

http://www.archive.org/details/truthfalsehoodro01thor

TRUTH AND FALSEHOOD.

A ROMANCE.

When sick of imprisoning walls,
  I fly to the sunshine and flowers;
When grief, or when care on me falls,
  I forget it, Romance, in thy bowers.

Not all a Fiction; much of Truth is there:
Historic Records, and a Poet's Dream.

TRUTH AND FALSEHOOD.

A ROMANCE.

BY ELIZABETH THORNTON,

AUTHORESS OF "THE MARCHIONESS," "LADY ALICE," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

CHAPMAN & HALL, 186, STRAND.

WILLIAM TAIT, EDINBURGH.

MDCCCXLVII.

EDINBURGH:
Printed by William Tait, 107, Prince's Street.

823
T394t
v. 1

PREFACE.

In presenting another book to the public, I accept the invitation of some of the reviewers who did me the honour to notice my last work, "The Marchioness." They bade me go on, and said they should be glad to recognise my hand again.

Once more, then, I appeal to a "jury of my countrymen," the Gentlemen of the

"press." Should the same (almost unanimous) verdict be returned, I shall be satisfied: that "The book, spite of its faults, will certainly not be laid down unfinished by any one who shall begin to read it." Praise enough, I think, for a writer of fiction, the end and aim of whose efforts is to interest and amuse.

In this present world, (although slowly but steadily progressing to a better state of things,) we cannot but see much we know to be wrong, and have no power to make right; I hold that we owe a debt of gratitude to the clever fictionists who open for us the regions of romance; and, when our spirits are harassed, and our hearts oppressed, by scenes of misery we can only partially alleviate, allow us to forget them

for a time, by a ramble through their pleasant mazes.

That some staid matter-of-fact people may find my romance too romantic, and condemn it as such, is possible: but they should remember, that the genius of romance is essentially wild and flighty, and will not submit to tight-lacing or confinement to a beaten track; and that even a grotesque originality is better than a tame and hackneyed copy of other people's ideas, however excellent.

Such as it is, I offer it to the idle and unoccupied as a pastime—to men of science and people of "busy minds" as a relaxation from study—a means of unbending the mental bow, which, bent too continuously or too long, produces disease and death.

Should it interest or amuse any man or woman of the latter class, let them record the fact; and thus bestow the best — the *only* recompense which can repay the trouble and expense of publishing to

THE AUTHOR.

TRUTH AND FALSEHOOD.

A ROMANCE.

CHAPTER I.

A COLD and gloomy day of November, 1525, was fast drawing to a close, as two mounted travellers were crossing a sterile and dreary tract of land, through which the road from Pampeluna to Oleron led. Suddenly one of them drew the bridle rein, and stopped with the exclamation, "Where the devil is the *valise*, Fritz?"

To this question his companion replied only by a stupid stare, as he also reined up his horse.

"Thou hast forgotten it, *Dummkopf!* Put spurs to thy horse, and seek it at the *venta* where we slept. I will wait thy return here," said he who had before spoken, pointing to a rude and crazy dwelling near them, much resembling an old barn, but which, from some withered vine branches suspended before its door, evidently claimed the rank of an inn, and offered accommodation to the wayfarer.

The traveller's instructions were promptly obeyed. The man to whom they were addressed galloped back over the recently-traversed road, while he continued his way slowly towards the door of the house, which stood alone on the waste, muttering to himself, "Now has that fellow's stupidity inflicted on me the penance of passing, perhaps, a whole day in this miserable grange!"

He was saluted at the entrance by a shock-headed, dirty-faced, but healthy and intelligent-looking boy, who took charge

of his horse, but left him to grope his way through a passage nearly dark, to a rude chamber or kitchen, where an old woman sat beside a hearth, on which some wet fagots were furiously smoking, as if in spite and anger at her efforts to make them burn.

He accosted her with the usual salutation in Spain, in the name of God and the Virgin Mary, to which she replied with the same civility; and when she had succeeded in rousing the sleepy and rebellious fire-wood, she began, at his request, to prepare something for his supper.

The short day had now given place to a dark and stormy night; and the traveller, finding nothing to interest him in this dull abode, retired, as soon as he had finished his comfortless meal, to what the mistress of the house was pleased to denominate a bed-chamber, but which would have been more truly called a hen-roost.

By profession a soldier, and of course

occasionally compelled to put up with rough accommodation, he had ceased to cherish a fastidious delicacy which so often clings to the minds, and mars the comfort, of the gently-nurtured.

With a soldier's carelessness, he flung himself on the mattress, and tried to sleep; but the tempestuous wind, fiercely howling round the old building, so shook the shattered doors and the unglazed casements, that he found it impossible.

Wearily he counted the lingering hours, and gladly hailed the first beams of returning light, when, rising from his restless couch, he descended the creaking stairs to the room where he had supped.

The family, it appeared, had not yet risen, for no one was visible as he sauntered to the outer door, where he stood contemplating the barren prospect spread around, looking still more cheerless through the gloomy gray haze of a wintry morning.

At length he was accosted by an old man, the *ventero*, or host. A civil greeting passed between them; and they continued the conversation, which began on general subjects, till the cold, raw air forced them to retreat to the interior, where they found the old dame engaged in another obstinate contest with the refractory firewood.

Once again her persevering efforts were successful, and in due time she placed a breakfast on a dirty board, yclept a table, with which the stranger, in default of better fare, was fain to content himself. As soon as the coarse meal was finished, Herman (for so the traveller was called) again took up his station at the door of the *venta*.

The house stood on a slight elevation, and commanded a view of the country around; but the prospect, as I said, was barren, bleak, and desolate, — a wide and dreary heath, unbroken by a human habita-

tion or the sight of living thing. The high road from Pampeluna was visible, as it descended a distant hill, but nothing moved upon it; and with a spirit wearied with the gloomy monotony of the scene, and another hearty curse on the *dummer Kerl*, Fritz, who had condemned him to this *triste séjour*, he turned away, and sought the shed which served as a stable, to see that his horse had been taken care of. While he continued to pat and talk to the favourite animal, which evidently knew, and rejoiced at the sight of its master, the jingling sound of bells saluted his ear.

The lively boy who stood beside him made a joyful bound, and clapping his hands with glee, exclaimed,—"Pedrillo! Pedrillo! Pedrillo is come!"

"Who is Pedrillo?" inquired Herman.

"He is an *arriero*," (a muleteer,) replied the boy.

"And why are you so glad that he is come?"

"Because he is a clever fellow, and a merry fellow," said the lad. "He plays on the guitar, sings old ballads, and tells long stories, better than any man in the country."

"Does he so?" said the *ennuiéd* traveller. "Then I also am glad he is come."

As he spoke, a mule, with his bells chiming in tinkling harmony, thrust his head into the shed, as if it were a place well-known to him, and one he would gladly enter, although regarded with contempt by the master of the more pampered steed. A second followed, led by the welcome Pedrillo, a short and sturdy young man, with a dark-brown, gipsy-looking face, shrewd, crafty, and intelligent in its expression, lighted up by a keen and cunning eye.

Saluting the stranger with much courtesy, and the boy with friendly familiarity, he proceeded to provide for the accommodation of his mules, which he called his children, and treated as such, by bestowing on them

alternately blows and caresses. No sooner was the business of the stable despatched, and the quadrupeds settled to their satisfaction, than the bipeds returned to that part of the building which was appropriated to their use.

The old dame, although it was yet early, had already recommenced her culinary labours, and was actively employed in preparing for the noonday meal. The same welcome greeting met the muleteer from the host and hostess, as he had before received from their grandson. As they pressed round him, plying him with questions and offering civilities, he replied with a wink, a nod, or a short sentence, uttered with an air of great condescension, showing he was aware of his own importance, and knew he was a great man, at least in the eyes of the inhabitants of the lonely *venta*.

When the storm of questions had somewhat subsided, the *ventero* retired to super-

intend some arrangements without, leaving the guests and the other members of his family to amuse each other. That they did so, was evident from the peals of laughter which broke forth from time to time among them.

Pedrillo was, in truth, as he had been represented, a clever fellow and very entertaining companion, possessing a great store of strange tales and marvellous adventures, which had befallen himself, or his comrades of the road, at different periods, and in various places. These he recounted with such varying tones of voice and feature, as displayed no inconsiderable share of dramatic skill, and kept up a strong interest in his auditors. To do him justice, we must also say, that when he had exhausted the stores of his memory, he could apply with success to a fertile imagination, and relate the most unheard-of events with an easy nonchalance,—a quiet matter-of-fact man-

ner, adding such minute and circumstantial details, as left the most determined doubter no choice but to believe. Pedrillo was also a musician, with a pleasant voice, a good ear, and much taste. No wonder, then, he was joyfully welcomed, and his appearance hailed as a god-send in this dolefully monotonous abode.

At the conclusion of a narrative of one of these "hair-breadth 'scapes" from some tremendous peril, the boy darted out of the room, and returned almost instantly with a guitar, which he presented to the muleteer, with a petition for a song.

"What shall it be, Jose?"

"Oh, 'The dark pine-woods and the gloomy cave,' or 'The Lady and the Page,' or 'Bernàl and Violantè,'" said the boy, eagerly.

The muleteer struck lightly the strings of his instrument, and produced a few low and melancholy notes, which were instantly

drowned by exclamations of impatience from the old woman. "*Santa Maria purisima!*" said she; "if you are going to moan out one of those weary ditties, as long as from here to Salamanca, I will go watch my *puchero*. If you would give us a gay *bolero*, a *seguidilla*, or a merry madrigal, well and good."

Pedrillo once again struck the chords of the guitar, and sounds so animating came forth, that the old dame sprang from her seat, and joined her grandson in his dance about the room. When they had wearied themselves, the woman went off to her cookery, and the boy again begged for a ballad. Pedrillo complied, and sang in a low, melodious, but somewhat monotonous tone, the ancient ballad of "Bernàl and Violantè," which will be found in the next chapter.

CHAPTER II.

THE ROMANCE OF BERNÀL AND VIOLANTÈ; OR, THE MIDNIGHT HOUR.

On the sea is Don Ramiro, chieftain of a gallant fame:
At the mast his flag is flying, terror of the Moorish name.
Grief hath mark'd the hero's features; pale his cheek, and sad his air;
Honour's ruthless hand hath torn him from his wedded lady fair.

Beauteous is his Violantè; lovelier form was never seen;
Fairest dame in all Hispania.—Oh, that she had constant been!
All beneath those towers is silent, which the restless ocean scan,
Where that stately castle rises, with its old, gray barbican.

Closed is every latticed casement. At the sound of vesper bell,
Every portal barr'd and bolted, absent lord and master tell.
Still and quiet—all are sleeping; soon will sound the midnight hour;
Yet a feeble light is glimm'ring from fair Violantè's bower.

O'er that wild and foaming ocean, where the waves are heaving high,
Muffled oars, unheard in dipping, force a fragile barque to fly:
Ever bold and ever venturous, in the still, dead hours of night
Flies that little barque so swiftly, steering for the glimm'ring light.

Many a night that beacon, gleaming, guides the little boat to land,—
Many a night a handsome stranger leaps upon the lonely strand.
Now that tide in vain is flinging sullen waves upon the shore,
Anxious eyes in vain are watching, now the rower comes no more.

. . . . . .

Fifteen days, all slowly passing, fifteen weary nights are gone,
Since that fairy barque was gliding—since the beacon vainly shone.
With a voice deep, hoarse, and sullen, clanging from the belfry tower,
Borne across the ocean waters, tolls the solemn midnight hour.

Once again a barque is anchor'd on the lone and silent shore,
And a low and gentle knocking sounds at Violantè's door.
"Who is there? So gently knocking, who at this late hour may be?"
"'Tis Bernàl, thy lover, lady! Open quick the door to me."

As a rosebud, sweet and blooming, Lady Violantè rose,—
With love's haste, her eager fingers soon the lattice bars unclose.
"Ah, thou com'st! At last thou comest! Long I've look'd for thee in vain!
Long my straining eye hath sought thee! Com'st thou far across the main?"

"Yes, I made a long, long voyage, ere I reach'd this well-known land."
"Are the waves so wild? Thou tremblest! Cold as ice thy shaking hand.

Do'st thou think my friends will find thee;—my relations cause thy fear?
Shrink not, love, there is no danger; none will find thee, dearest, here.

"Do'st thou dread my pages, vassals? All are in these towers asleep;
Wearied with the day's diversions, none a midnight vigil keep!
Thou com'st arm'd. Do'st fear my husband? He is far, oh, far away;
Be thou sure the fierce Morescoes long will his return delay!"

"No way do I heed thy vassals, nor thy pages do I fear;
Prompt obedience will they yield me, when they my commands shall hear.
Thy relations — friends I dread not; — thy relations are my own.
For thy friends who are not mine, too, let them tremble at my frown!

"And thy husband, Violantè—Violantè once so dear,
Thou, alas! must see with terror that wrong'd husband who—is here!"

. . . . . .

Ere the morn again is gladd'ning earth with fresh and fragrant breath,
See the guilty Violantè, barefoot, on her way to death.

Coarse and rude the sackcloth garments which her fragile form disgrace,
Coarse and rude the hempen girdle bound around her slender waist;
Through the antique portals passing, in procession sad and slow,
Cowled monks, white torches bearing, onward to the scaffold go.

The tragic tale, with its mournful music, was now interrupted by a summons to dinner, from the mistress of the mansion, which, it appeared, she had hastened for the purpose, as she declared, of putting a stop to these *lagrymosas*, for which she herself had no taste. Her grandson and the traveller, although they did not appear very grateful for the activity she had displayed, notwithstanding aided willingly in the demolition of the *puchero* and its accompaniments, and also in emptying a couple of wine flasks, the contents of which met with much approbation.

No sooner was the repast finished, and the good dame had retired with the empty dishes, than Pedrillo was requested to continue the ballad; but he declared he must first see what "his children" were about, and departed for that purpose. After a short absence he returned; and, again taking up the guitar, resumed the tale.

Weeping damsels, trembling pages, pale and awe-struck vassals stand ;
All with deepest grief are gazing, in a mute and mournful band.
Meek, in sad submission bending, lowly bowed her graceful head,
With a voice of earnest pleading, thus the pallid lady said :

" Oh my much wrong'd lord and husband, great my sins to thee have been;
Yet, forgive me ! Oh, let pardon close this last sad fatal scene;
Let my death be deem'd atonement, great and heavy though my crime ;
Death ! a felon's death, inflicted in my fresh and youthful prime !

" Humbly earnest, I implore thee, spare, oh spare *his* precious life !
Right and just the heavy sentence on thy lost and guilty wife;
But to *him* was ne'er accorded, as to me, thy worth to know:
Had *he* known thee, valiant captain, never had he wrong'd thee so ! "

Sternly stood the Don Ramiro. As these pleading accents broke
On his ear, sweet love and mercy struggling in his heart awoke;
Softening in its fierce expression, on her turn'd his gloomy eye,
Dreamy—as in memory tracing days of peace and joy gone by.

But, at mention of his rival, jealous ire and fury came;
Love and mercy fled affrighted at the hated rival's name.
Deep and mournful is the stillness—only broken by the sound
Of a low and stifled wailing—reigns in solemn sadness round.

Faintly is the torchlight gleaming on the chief's contracted brow,
While his pallid lips are quivering with the signal for the blow.
Quick the fatal axe descending, on her beauteous neck it fell;
Sobs and groans, in heavy murmurs, on the morn's first breezes swell.

. . . . . .

Three long days of gloom and mourning; nights succeeding, cold and dark,
When once more, across the ocean, comes the bold and venturous barque.
Little barque, so lightly gliding, where the crested waters roar,
Vainly waiting for the glimm'ring beacon-light which beams no more.

Vainly does thy gallant rower ever guide thee to and fro!
Vainly strain his ear for signals; sounds it never more shall know.
Rash—impatient—near and nearer comes the little boat to land;
Once again the handsome stranger leaps upon the lonely strand.

All is darkness—all is silence—till, with startling gloomy power,
By the cavern'd rocks repeated, tolls again the midnight hour,
See, the castle vaults unclosing, widely yawns the marble tomb,
And, to meet the daring stranger, lo, a female form is come!

"Ha! It is my Violantè! Com'st thou, loveliest, then to me?
With impatience long I've waited on the cold and stormy sea."
"Yes she comes, Bernàl, to met thee—Violantè—thine no more!
Violantè comes to warn thee, quick to fly this treacherous shore.

"Danger, dearest, hovers o'er thee, peril dire thy steps attends;
A wrong'd husband's wrath pursues thee, hitherward his course he bends.

For the guilty love I cherish'd, I my forfeit life have paid.—
Died for thee! Thy Violantè in the silent tomb was laid!

"Cold those arms which once embraced thee; cold those lips which kisses gave;
And the heart that beat so fondly—in the dark and humid grave.
But the mighty love I bore thee, strong as death, has reft the tomb,
From the trance of death aroused me; and to save thee, love, I come!"

"If the arms which once embraced me, and the lips which kisses gave—
Lips that open'd but to bless me—lie within the silent grave;—
If, for me, that dear one perish'd—dying by the cruel knife,—
Made the earth a dreary desert,—what have I to do with life?

"There, where Violantè lieth, in the tomb Bernàl will lie!
Let him come, the wrathful husband! nought have I to do but die!"
"Live, oh live, my caballero! Live to bless some happier dame;
Teach the children she may bear thee to avoid my guilt and shame!

"Fly, oh fly from Don Ramiro! Fly, oh fly thy threaten'd doom!
If thou wouldst that Violantè rest in peace within her tomb!"

. . . . . .

Lo! the castle gates are opening; rushing downwards to the strand
Comes a host of armed vassals, bearing each a torch in hand.

At their head the sullen chieftain, furious as the mountain storm,
But his deadly aim is baffled by a shadowy female form ;
Vainly does his practised falchion ever seek his rival's side ;
Still the phantom flits before him ! — 'Tis his young and once-loved bride.

Sometimes in her bridal garments, sometimes in a funeral shroud,
Violantè hovers round him, airy as a summer cloud ;
Till across the stormy waters, o'er that sea all wild and dark,
Like a bird, so lightly skimming, flies again the little barque.

No sooner was the ballad finished than Pedrillo laid down the guitar and retired; while Herman once more listlessly sauntered to the outer door, to send forth another vain and weary glance in search of the man for whom he waited.

The storm had now wholly subsided, and left a cold, clear, frosty atmosphere, which permitted the eye to range unchecked over the surrounding country, and to note any object moving on it ; but, alas ! there was none, and he was about to re-enter the house, humming a verse of the ballad to

which he had been listening, whose melancholy tone seemed well suited to his present mood, when suddenly the expected horseman appeared on the brow of the distant hill. Much rejoiced, he waited his advance; but, instead of descending the hill, he sat motionless in his saddle, and was almost immediately joined by another horseman; and both appeared to be watching some object on the road they had just quitted.

Greatly surprised, he now thought he must have mistaken the identity of the man whom he had first seen, and hastily moved forward to ascertain the fact. At the same moment that he discovered his error, that it was not the *dummer Kerl*, Fritz, but a stranger, a clumsy ill-shapen machine, drawn by six horses, became visible, and two more mounted attendants. In these days of vehicular elegance, such a machine would scarcely be honoured with the name of a carriage; but in the sixteenth century,

when these things were few and rarely seen, it announced the approach of some person of distinction.

It appeared that the travellers, whoever they were, must have come fast and far, for the smoking and jaded horses with difficulty drew the cumbrous vehicle up the ascent on which he stood. As it approached the *venta*, he saw that it contained two ladies, one of them handsome, and apparently seven or eight-and-twenty years of age; the other a portly dame, who might have been her mother, and a gentleman, somewhat younger than the latter, whose face indicated a quiet, easy indolence of character, strongly contrasting with the keen animation and restless activity which now marked the countenance of the younger lady, as she eagerly exclaimed, in the French language:—"Try, try, De Verneux, if it be not possible to get horses!"

"Alas! madam," he replied, "the appear-

ance of the place but too certainly forbids all hope of that."

As he spoke, he quitted the carriage and joined the group assembled at the door of the inn, formed by its gaping inhabitants and the muleteer, who stood with a keen and curious eye, noting every thing that occurred in and round the carriage; while the dismounted horsemen who had accompanied it, with the bridles in their hands, waited, with anxious and perplexed faces, near it. It was soon ascertained that two slight mules were the only disposable quadrupeds to be found; and the gentleman addressed as De Verneux, quickly returned to report his ill success, and to hold a consultation with the ladies, relative to their present position, which, from the expression of their faces, appeared to be one of considerable embarrassment.

The coachman still kept his seat and the postilions their saddles; but all seemed

equally at a loss to decide on what was next to be done. At length the younger lady addressed some words to the coachman, to which he replied:—"Assuredly, madam, they might be goaded on for another league or two; but this, I beg leave to say, would but render your situation worse, by leaving you without the shelter of a roof so humble as this, even, under which to pass the night."

The expression of vexation and disappointment deepened on her countenance, and she answered, with something of bitterness, some observation of the elder female:—"Yes, it is very well for you to be calm and quiet! *You* run no risk of being dragged back to Madrid!"

The lady to whom these sharp words were addressed looked grieved and annoyed, as she said, gravely:—"You are well aware, madam, that I am far less anxious about my own safety than about yours; but I must take the liberty again to counsel you

to remain here for the present. The day is already far advanced. This house, destitute as it probably is of all decent accommodation, is yet better than passing the night without shelter. In the morning the horses will be in a condition to proceed. You risk nothing at present," she added, in a more earnest tone; "your passport is yet efficient; and, if even the worst you apprehend should take place, if you should be compelled to return to Madrid, you will yet, assuredly, be treated with all honour and respect."

"Honour and respect!" she repeated angrily. "Yes, I well know what I have to expect if I again fall into the hands of that false and treacherous —— Talk not to me, Madame Dumont, of returning. There is no danger I would not sooner brave! My liberty is precious — most precious now, since, if deprived of that, how can I hope to aid my unhappy brother?"

This short dialogue between the two ladies had not been carried on in so low a tone of voice as to prevent its reaching the ears of Herman, who had advanced, and now stood near the carriage. He knew not who they were, nor what they wished to do; but they were females—ladies—one of them very handsome — evidently vexed and embarrassed. All the feelings of the man—the chivalry of the gentleman—were roused. He advanced to the side of the carriage with a courteous bow, a slight apology, and the offer of his services, if he could in any way be useful to them.

The ladies both fixed their eyes on him, the younger with a keen scrutinizing glance; replying only, "I thank you, sir."

After a pause, she said, "You wear a peasant's dress, but your language and your manner belong to a higher class; I will, therefore, tell you that my safety requires that I should reach the frontier of France

with the least possible delay. If you, sir, can in any way aid me to do so, or suggest any means by which it may be done, you will confer on me a great obligation. My horses are tired and cannot go on; and my people," she added, somewhat spitefully, "can invent no better expedient than to wait here, quietly, till overtaken by the danger I am anxious to avoid."

Herman, again assuring her it would give him great pleasure to be of use to her, walked off in search of means to aid her; but, alas! the mode of moving that heavy machine was not to be found, and after some delay he also returned to report a want of success.

A cloud of vexation again shaded her face, on seeing which, he said, with a hesitating half-decided manner, "I have been able to devise but one plan, and that, I am afraid, will appear to you, madam, so wild and unseemly, that you will not have the

courage, the confidence in me, necessary to carry it through."

He paused, and she said eagerly, "Let me hear it, however. I do not want courage when its exertion can aid me in escaping from a perilous position."

Thus encouraged, he said, "I trust, madam, you will believe that I would not propose such a plan, did I see any other means of aiding you; but I do not. It is this: we are not more than sixteen leagues from the French frontier. I have a strong, fast, and fresh horse; I have found in the stable an old pillion, and—" again Herman stopped, and hesitated.

"Go on, sir," said the lady.

"If you could trust yourself to my protection and guidance, I would undertake to bear you, in a few hours, out of the Spanish dominions."

The younger lady listened to this proposal with a grave face; the elder, with

one utterly aghast. That of Monsieur De Verneux was characterized by a sort of indignant horror. While she mused, as if half inclined to adopt this expedient, wild and desperate as it was, her female friend saw that she hesitated, and, unable to suppress her terror, at length burst forth with exclamations on the danger, the insanity of resorting to such a measure.

"Peace, Dumont!" said she. "Thou canst not aid me to escape the difficulties which beset me. I pray thee therefore to be quiet, that I may myself decide on what to do."

As she uttered these words, she appeared to be reflecting. In a short time she raised her eyes, and once more anxiously scrutinized the young man who stood waiting her decision.

There was nothing in his appearance to excite suspicion. On the contrary, there was an expression of frank good humour,

and much intelligence in his face, which, joined to a manly, well-formed person, was rather calculated to inspire confidence. He had reached that period of life which may be termed early manhood; for although his frame was muscular and strongly built, he did not appear to be more than eighteen or twenty years of age. His dress was such as was commonly worn by the lower and middle classes in Spain; an ample cloak of a coarse woollen stuff, and a broad-brimmed hat, looped up in front. He spoke both French and Spanish, but with an accent which announced him a native of neither France nor Spain.

He saw that the lady to whom he had offered his services still hesitated whether to accept them or not, and again, with a modest but firm and decided air, he said, "If you venture, madam, to commit yourself to my care, I pledge the word of a gentleman to place you in safety, or perish

in the attempt. I am well armed, and have no doubt of being able to do so; but I must entreat that your decision may be made at once. The day is far advanced, and every minute is precious."

The cloud of care and incertitude, which had hitherto shaded her face, disappeared as he spoke, and she replied with a sweet and gracious smile, "Once again I thank you, sir, for the offer of your services, I accept them, and will place myself under your protection, with the fullest reliance on your honour and plighted word. I am ready now to accompany you," she added, wrapping the travelling cloak, which covered her dress, more closely round her.

In a few minutes, the handsome and spirited horse was led forth by its master. At the sight of it, Madame Dumont and Monsieur De Verneux, who had remained still in mute consternation, broke forth again into entreaties that she would abandon this

rash step, or at least suffer Monsieur De Verneux to take the stranger's place on the horse, as her guide and protector.

"No, no, De Verneux!" she said, half laughing. "You are a quiet, pleasant sort of *laissez passer* person in a lady's train; but by no means calculated to undertake the arduous duties of a knight-errant to a wandering and distressed dame. *Adieu, mon cher* De Verneux! *Adieu, ma bonne* Dumont! I shall hasten forward on my journey, and you will follow me as soon as you can."

Although these transactions have taken some time to narrate, not more than an hour had elapsed after the arrival of the carriage at the door of the *venta*, ere the lady, who was evidently the principal person among the party of French travellers, was seated behind her youthful guardian, holding fast by a broad belt, buckled round his waist, and who, leaving instructions for the

person for whom he had been waiting, galloped off towards the hazy mountain range visible in the distance, leaving the lady's companions utterly disconsolate. The chagrin of Madame Dumont was indeed somewhat alleviated by a small portion of spite, with which she contemplated the punishment and repentance she anticipated as the inevitable result of a step so rash and imprudent, on the part of her friend or mistress, whichever she might be.

CHAPTER III.

MEANTIME the gallant horse sped onward as swiftly as if he had been accustomed to bear a double burden, until they had traversed the whole extent of the barren heathy land, and the surface changed from the short dry turf, partially covered with patches of low, scrubby furze, to a deep and heavy sand, in which the noble animal, free and fresh as he was, could make but slow progress. Fortunately a couple of leagues terminated this wearying and laborious tract, and the road began to ascend on firm and rocky ground.

As they mounted, the daylight declined fast and the cold augmented. Herman, reckoning on the rising of the moon (which was nearly full,) in an hour or two, wrapped

the lady's cloak more closely round her, and pushed on his willing steed. But as the ascent became steeper, his pace necessarily slackened, and they were slowly climbing in darkness, when, in a pause of the conversation which had been carried on between him and his fair charge, she said, "Did I not hear the bells of a mule?"

After listening a moment, he replied, "Yes. I distinguish also the clatter of hoofs on the hard road behind us. It is not possible: it cannot be Pedrillo. Little more than three hours have passed since we quitted the *venta*, and he declared his mules must have at least a day's rest before he would be able to resume his journey. They are probably smugglers," he added, at the same time, with prudent precaution, shifting the bridle to his left hand, he placed his right on one of the pistols in his belt.

Notwithstanding this declaration of the musical muleteer, Herman, after listening

with some anxiety to the slow ascent of those behind, had at length the satisfaction of being overtaken and joined by him. Greatly was that satisfaction augmented when his ears were saluted with a shout of joy and the exclamation of "*Ach mein lieber Herr. Ich habe Sie wieder gefunden,*" in the well-known voice of his man, Fritz. Bold and brave as he was, he could not but feel his situation to be forlorn and perilous in these solitary and unsafe roads.

Charged with the fettering responsibility for the lady's safety, who with so much confidence had committed herself to his protection, he had felt the lonely isolation of his position; and the *dummer Kerl*, Fritz, instead of a rattling jobation for his stupidity, was hailed with a glad welcome by his master, as the faithful fellow appeared at his side, with the missing *valise*, now visible in the beams of the rising moon. After a few questions and answers ex-

changed between them, Herman turned to the muleteer with the inquiry of what had led him so quickly to change his plans.

"Why you see, camarado," he replied, "after you were gone—that is to say, as you were going, it came into my head that as these mountain roads are never too safe at any time, little accidents happening on them sometimes, such as a man being found stretched stark and stiff on the ground with his pockets and his packages (if he happen to have any) rifled, and nobody able, or what is much the same, nobody *willing* to tell who laid him there; as I said, it came into my head that these roads not having too good a name in peaceful times, were not likely to be better now, when there is so much quarrelling and fighting among kings and princes, and that it would be better for you and for me, if we were to travel together. So I saddled my mules and left the *venta* almost at the same time

as yourself, trusting to come up with you; for although my children had no chance against your horse equally weighted, yet with a double burden on the horse, we are pretty fairly matched. And this man," he added, "who I found was also a camarado ——"

"*Ja, der Schelm!*" exclaimed Fritz, to whom he pointed, interrupting him, for Fritz understood well enough what was said, although no great proficient in any language except his native German; "*Ja*, he did all he could to prevent my following you."

"How is this, Pedrillo?" said Herman, explaining to him the man's assertion.

"Ah yes, Señor," he replied carelessly, "it is true enough. I saw he had ridden hard already, and I thought it better for you and myself not to be encumbered with a companion who might be unable to keep up with us, and who might perhaps impede our progress."

The moon was now shining brightly, but her cold clear light served only to illumine a dreary landscape; black and rugged rocks fissured by frightful gullies, so deep that the torrents roaring in the bottom were unheard; huge and naked cliffs rearing their giant heads on high, stern and frowning, like the genius of desolation in its favourite home. Nothing of vegetation was seen, save here and there a group of cork trees, which, sighing and shivering in the icy breeze, but served to add another gloomy feature to the dismal scene.

The muleteer who, whenever the road admitted of his doing so, continued to ride beside Herman's horse, exerted himself with extraordinary assiduity to cheer and amuse the lady, but his efforts met with little success; for suffering physically from the severity of the cold, and mentally from the embarrassment of her strange and hazardous position, she gave but little attention to his

words, and scarcely uttered one herself by way of reply.

In about an hour they came to a part where another road branched off, and which Herman was about to take, as leading direct to the point he wished to reach; but the muleteer asserted so boldly that it would lead them *from* that place, that well as he believed himself acquainted with the route he had planned, he hesitated.

"I tell you, Señor camarado," said Pedrillo, "that road will lead you towards Roncesvalles; *this* is the one we must take. You still hesitate; is it likely that *I* should be mistaken, who have traversed them both hundreds of times?"

Herman, although scarcely convinced, followed him, and they continued to ride on, talking and alternately relating some accident or adventure which had befallen the one or the other. Pedrillo's store of adventures indeed appeared to be inexhaustible.

In the middle of one of them, to which Herman was listening with great interest, his attention was recalled to his charge by some feebly-uttered and half-heard accents from her almost frozen lips, as she relaxed her hold on the strap attached to his belt, by which she had hitherto kept herself steady in her seat.

He now perceived with anxiety and alarm that she was so benumbed by the cold as to be wholly unable to support herself. Dismounting, he took off his cloak, and, wrapping it round her, again mounted, placing her before him, and supporting her almost motionless form with his arm, rode on.

"*Santa Maria!* she will be frozen to death, Señor caballero," said the muleteer. "A little farther on is the cabin of a mountain hunter, as honest a fellow as ever lived. If you like to turn a little out of your road, I can show you the way to his hut. He is a sure marksman, and has now, I will be

bound, a bit of game roasting before a fire we should none of us be sorry to get a sight of, although better able to bear the cold than this poor chicken of a lady."

Herman eagerly listened to this information, inquiring how far it was to the house he spoke of.

"Oh, not far, Señor; a little half-league; and we are now close to the place where the road turns off."

Situated as he now was, he had no choice but to follow this advice, and they soon after quitted the direct road to thread a mountain track, only wide enough to admit a horse to pass, so that the muleteer was compelled to dismount and tie the head of one mule to the tail of the other.

This "little half-league" appeared to Herman to have no end; for he thought they must have already travelled three times that distance, and still they were scrambling through the rugged defile, seemingly as

far from shelter as when they first quitted the road.

At length the welcome bark of a dog met the travellers' ears, — the more welcome, inasmuch as it sounded near to them. Very soon after, a rude habitation became visible, and on the door being opened, at the urgent summons of the muleteer, the gladdening sight of a bright fire blazing on the hearth, and cheerily lighting up the rough walls of a good-sized room, relieved the anxious fears by which Herman had been tormented for the health and safety of his delicate and helpless charge.

The party were received with much civility and a hospitable offer of all the accommodation his cottage could afford, by a man whom Pedrillo saluted by the name of Juan Gomez. The poor half-frozen lady was placed in a seat near the fire; and, to the infinite satisfaction of Herman, very soon after their arrival, a female, apparently about sixteen,

whom the host addressed as his niece, made her appearance, and took charge of her.

Removing the coarse cloak in which she was wrapped, she proceeded to chafe her hands and feet, and, supplying her from time to time with a little hot wine, Tornalina (for so the host called her) had soon the pleasure of seeing her kind and careful assiduity rewarded by the restoration of her guest to sense and motion. As the chilled blood began again to circulate, the poor lady moaned, as if in pain; but this soon ceased, and her bright eyes once more beamed with intelligence.

Could the interior of this mountain hut have been painted at this moment, it would have afforded an interesting *tableau*. The singular and picturesque dress of the men, in good keeping with the room they occupied, the rude walls of which were decorated with the destructive instruments and the rough spoils of the chase,—guns, nets, spears,

and hunting knives, with the skins, horns, and feet of animals, hung or lay around with other trophies of the hunter's success; while in marked contrast, near the hearth, a strong light thrown on their figures by the blazing wood, sat the two females, both very handsome, yet very different in age, person, and appearance. The slight and girlish form of Tornalina, seated on the earthen floor of the cottage, with her youthful face raised, and her large dark eyes fixed with curiosity and interest on the person and dress of the guest, whose feet she was warming in her lap; the guest, evidently of superior rank, and much older than the Spanish maiden, was, in turn, regarding her with the warmest good-will.

The cloak which had covered her dress being now thrown off, showed that she wore a widow's mourning. Her age appeared to be about seven or eight-and-twenty, although in fact she was some years older. Her person and face, symmetrical and lovely,

were, like her air and manner, characterized by a gentle grace and dignity, inspiring at once love and respect.

In a short time, the hot wine and the warmth of the room appeared to have produced a heavy drowsiness, and she fell asleep with her head leaning against the high back of the chair on which she sat. Tornalina, gently disengaging herself, placed a cushion under her feet, and quitted her to put the supper on the table, at which were sitting Herman and his man only, the other two, Pedrillo and the host, not having yet re-entered. To the stable, therefore, the young girl now went to call them.

She was not long absent; yet, when she returned, Herman thought the expression of her face was changed. He fancied that she looked anxious and uneasy, as she advanced to the sleeping lady, and continued to gaze at her, as it appeared to him, with augmented curiosity and interest; then, turn-

ing, she approached him, as if about to speak. At this moment the door opened, her uncle and Pedrillo entered, when, again turning, she walked away. Herman, hungry as he was, soon forgot the curiosity her manner had raised, in the agreeable task of aiding in the destruction of an ample and excellent dish of mountain venison, stewed with *garbanzos*, (a sort of bean,) and in emptying several flasks of good wine.

CHAPTER IV.

ANIMATED by the warmth and the good cheer, the tongues of the host and his guests were alike set free, and a lively conversation was carried on, principally supported by Gomez and Pedrillo, interspersed with rustic witticisms, coarse jokes, and now and then a characteristic oath.

The host, who appeared to be somewhat of a politician, asked numerous questions relative to the state of the country, and the different powers who were then agitating Europe with their conflicting interests. To these Pedrillo replied; for Herman seemed little disposed to talk on such subjects.

"And what have you done with the King of France?" said the host.

"Oh, we have him safely caged at Madrid."

"Ha! I am sorry for him; for he is a gay and gallant gentleman. I remember him well. I used to see him often, in former days, before I was perched up in this old kite's nest. They say he is ill, dying, as Bernardo told us."

"No," said the muleteer, "he is better, and out of danger, as far as his health is concerned."

"And our Prince Henry, D'Albret of Navarre, who was taken with him, you have caged him too, I suppose?"

"No, he has escaped. He took to his bed pretending to be ill, and one fine morning walked off in his servant's clothes, leaving the man in his place."

"Bravo, bravo!" shouted Gomez, thumping the table with a force that made the drinking-horns jump. "Good! ha, ha, ha! *por Sant Ignacio!* But this was fighting

young Carlos, the fox, your King of Spain, with his own weapons. Ha, ha, ha! I am glad our prince has got away. I was born a Navarresa, and have fought for my country; and sometimes I think I should like to be among my old comrades again, although I did get more blows, and less meat, than I do here. The French traitor, the Duke of Bourbon, who fought against his country, where is he?"

"At Toledo, with the emperor and his court," said Pedrillo. "They say he is to marry one of the king's sisters."

"No, no, he will not!—he will not!" said the lady, distinctly.

Gomez, Pedrillo, and Herman, all turned their eyes towards her, surprised, having believed her to be soundly sleeping. In fact, she was so. The words were unconsciously uttered, and had, probably, no connexion with the subject in discussion, and when again she repeated the words, "He

will not, he will not," in the same distinct tone, her eyes were still closed, her face and figure motionless.

While this conversation had continued between Pedrillo and the host, Herman's attention had been drawn, and his curiosity again excited by Tornalina, who, he thought, watched him. Turn which way he would, the large dark eyes of the Spanish maiden were ever on him. He would, probably, have accounted for this circumstance in a way gratifying to his vanity; for it was by no means the first time he had attracted the attention of a youthful female; but there was, in the present instance, an expression of restless uneasiness in the damsel's face, that forbade his flattering himself, and embarrassed him greatly.

For the first time, something like a vague suspicion of treachery crossed his mind. He saw the strong interest Tornalina took in her female guest. The lady had declared

herself to be in danger while within the Spanish territory. He knew not who she was, nor the nature of the danger which threatened her; but he had pledged his word to carry her safely to France, and, when he recollected how he had been induced to quit the known and beaten road for this wild and remote abode, he became seriously uneasy, and resolved to depart immediately.

In pursuance of this determination, he asked Pedrillo whether he intended to go any farther, declaring his own intention of setting off at once.

"*Por todos los diablos!*" exclaimed the muleteer, by way of reply, and with a vexed face, as if disagreeably roused by the intelligence. "Señor caballero, I don't mean to say any thing uncivil, but in my opinion he would be little better than a madman, or something worse, who would rouse that poor lady-bird from her quiet sleep in this

UNIVERSITY
ILLINOIS LIBR

warm nest, and drag her out again through the rough mountain roads, cold and dark, (for the moon will soon be down,) at the risk of breaking her neck and his own over some precipice, or getting her throat cut by thieves."

This speech, uttered with startling energy, greatly shook the determination of Herman. It did, indeed, appear like cruelty to expose the poor lady, now so quietly sleeping, to the piercing cold of the mountain air, from which she had already so severely suffered. Pedrillo saw that he hesitated, and added, in a jocose and good-humoured tone, "Come, Caballero, sit down and be quiet, and I will sing you a gentle ditty, which will lull you to sleep also."

Taking up a guitar, he sung, in a low tone of voice, a lullaby sort of air sufficiently soothing. As soon as he had finished, Tornalina stretched forth her hand for the guitar, saying, as she took it, "Now, sir

traveller, *I* will sing for your amusement; you shall have *my* lullaby."

Striking the chords of the instrument with a free, bold hand, she sung, with a clear voice and a dashing abruptness of style, strangely contrasting with the music of the muleteer, and better calculated to rouse than to lull her auditors,—

THE WARNING.

The lady she said to the armèd knight,
"On the mountain thou must not stay;
'Tis here, 'tis here that the raven croaks,
Go, hasten along thy way."

"No raven is heard on the mountain top,
In the beams of the sunny morn;
'Tis down in the dell, and its twilight shade,
That he winds his boding horn."

But she said again to the armèd knight,—
"The vulture that screams for his prey
Is perch'd in the cleft of the mountain gorge,—
Oh, tarry not on thy way."

"And what care I for the screaming bird,
Though perch'd on the rock he be?
Nor raven nor vulture shall scare me hence,
I'll rest me awhile with thee."

The lady she frown'd on the armèd knight:
"Rash knight, thou *shalt not* stay!
For the death-owls cry, and the wolf is nigh,
Quick!—hasten along thy way."

From the singular style in which this was sung, and the significant look directed to himself, Herman could no longer doubt that "The Warning" was addressed to him; and, immediately rising, he proceeded to awaken the lady, who still slept, in spite of the clashing chords of the instrument, and the loud voice of the damsel.

He awoke her with difficulty; and scarcely had she opened her eyes ere they again closed, and he essayed in vain to make her comprehend the necessity for their departure. A complete torpor seemed to have seized her senses.

While thus employed, Pedrillo rose from his seat, saying, "Well, Señor, since you *will* go, the sooner you are off the better; for the moon will not wait, you know, and you will get on badly without her light!

Come, Gomez, let us go and help to saddle the horses."

Thus saying, they followed Fritz, who had already quitted the room, and Herman turned to seek an explanation from Tornalina; but she had disappeared.

Recollecting some directions he had omitted to give his servant, he hastily passed through the half-closed door, and was advancing when the sound of his host's voice reached his ear, engaged, as it appeared, in earnest conference with the muleteer; for his own approach to a reed fence, which served as a shelter from the mountain winds, and behind which they stood, was unheard.

"If you are sure you are not mistaken, and it can be done," said Gomez, as if in reply to some proposal.

"I *am* sure — quite sure! I thought I knew her when I first saw her, muffled up as she was; and now I am quite positive

I am not mistaken," replied Pedrillo. "Courage, man! If we succeed we shall be well paid for a little risk and trouble."

"Courage! yes, we shall need it!" said Gomez. "'Tis your calm and quiet people, with a close-shut mouth, like this young man, that are the very devil when roused. He and his man are both as strong as two young lions; and you — you are a better hand at scheming than at fighting, as I well remember. Don't you recollect ——"

"Pooh! nonsense!" said the muleteer, interrupting him. "Let me manage, and we shall have no need to fight at all. And if we should—you say Antonio will be here in an hour or two at most."

"Yes," said the host; "but ——"

"But what?"

"If any harm should come to the lady: she is a kind friend to the ill-used and unhappy who have no other friend, as I know,

and to the Calvinistas,[1] who are treated like dogs, and hunted like wild beasts. I don't half like the business."

"Harm to the lady!" exclaimed his companion. "Do'st think I'm such a *borrico* as to harm *her*, when I tell thee the Emperor would give three of his fingers to get hold of her?"

"Well! well!" said Gomez, hesitatingly, as if giving a reluctant consent. "Try first what you can do by fair means."

"I will," replied Pedrillo. "Remember, Juan Gomez, if thou lettest this chance of mending thy fortune slip through thy fingers, thou may'st whistle for such another."

The voice of Fritz, singing as he advanced, put an end to the conference. Herman returned to the house, pondering on what

[1] A slight anachronism. Calvin at this time was scarcely twenty years old, and had not, of course, given a name to that sect of Protestants who adopted his doctrines. But "*Calvinista*" was afterwards the Spanish term for Protestant.

he had heard, forgetting the instructions he had intended to give his man, and greatly embarrassed to decide on what steps to take. That the safety, or at least the liberty of his fair charge, was seriously threatened, and his own consequently endangered as her protector, he could no longer doubt. Yet what measures could he take for their mutual defence, in utter ignorance of their plan of attack?

Anxiously, as he re-entered, he looked for Tornalina, hoping to obtain from her some clew by which to guide himself; but she was still absent, and he knew not where to seek her.

The lady was still asleep; but now fully aware of the necessity of keeping his arms free from the burden of a sleeping woman, he determined to awaken her effectually. For this purpose he gently shook her, and recollecting she had made some allusion to a brother in whose fate she seemed deeply

interested, and on whose account her liberty was more than commonly precious, he now availed himself of this knowledge as a means by which to rouse her.

"For Heaven's sake, madam, wake up!" he said, as soon as he saw her heavy eyelids raised. "Rouse yourself! How can you hope to aid your brother, unless you exert yourself to quit this place?"

The stimulus thus judiciously applied produced its effect on her half congested brain. Raising herself to a more erect position, she fixed her eyes on him with a vacant and bewildered stare, slowly repeating, "My brother!"

Suddenly all their native intelligence flashed from them, and she reiterated, "My brother! my unhappy, my imprisoned brother! Oh yes, sir, you are right! I thank you for reminding me of a duty so imperious as that with which I am charged. I am ready, quite ready to resume my journey."

Rising from her seat she stood erect, changed in a moment from the torpid, inert slumberer, to the graceful, dignified, and animated woman, exhibiting the prompt and complete triumph of the mind over the body.

Rejoiced to have made this first necessary step, Herman still hesitated as to what was next to be done. Fritz did not come, as he expected, to announce that the horses were ready; and under the mysterious circumstances—the vague and unknown danger which menaced them, he did not think it prudent again to quit his charge.

While he yet remained doubtful how to act, Gomez and Pedrillo entered, and seating themselves at the table, proceeded to fill their cups from a fresh flask of wine.

"Come, Señor viajador," said the muleteer, "take another cup of this excellent Paxarete before you start, to keep the cold out of your stomach!"

But Herman, who knew he cherished some treacherous design, though ignorant of its nature, refused to taste the wine, lest it might be drugged.

"Well, well," he said again. "It is not often wine like this goes begging for some one to drink it; so, if you will not, I will, Señor. A pleasant journey to you and the lady."

Pedrillo's own face was immovably grave as he uttered this, but a sly grin evidently distorted the features of the host, and confirmed Herman in his determination to watch them closely, and on no account to suffer himself to be again separated from the lady, in whose fate he became more interested, as the perils that seemed to beset her developed themselves.

Some time elapsed in this manner; the two men drinking and talking, Herman and the lady impatiently awaiting the arrival of Fritz, who, however, came not. Anger at

his delay, and fear for the safety of his faithful servant, alternately gave place to each other in the mind of his master, who continued to stride up and down the room, occasionally going to the door to listen. Once he made a step or two beyond it, in his anxiety to ascertain what had become of him; but, still watchful and on his guard, returned instantly on hearing a movement of the men within.

He met them at the door, and from the haste and precipitation of their manner, was convinced their intention had been to exclude him, and prevent his re-entrance. Situated as he now was, he thought it most prudent to take no notice, nor show any suspicion of such an intention, but to content himself with requesting the lady in a low voice not to suffer herself to be separated from him.

The lady had tact and knowledge of the world; she had seen the impatience and

anxiety of her protector to be gone—had marked the haste with which the two men followed him, and the disappointment visible in their faces on his re-appearance. A hint was sufficient, she was perfectly aware of her position, and prepared to act accordingly.

In a few minutes Tornalina again made her appearance, and was eagerly watched by Herman, who could not but regard her, after all that had passed, as a friend who possessed the will, if not the power, to aid them. He saw or fancied that the uneasy and perplexed look had in some measure disappeared, and that her face now bore a more cheerful expression.

Once or twice he thought she seemed to listen, as she stood in humble deference behind her female guest, as if in expectation of something or some one. Herman remembered with no very agreeable feelings that it was perhaps Antonio, (whose return

Gomez had announced as certain,) that she expected. Yet, if she was indeed a friend to the strangers, why should she wish for the presence of one on whom their enemies confidently relied for aid against them?

While he continued to harass himself with vain guesses and useless speculations, the deep-mouthed baying of a hound was heard, and then a second and a third joined in a booming chorus.

At the first sound of this apparently unexpected noise, Gomez listened a moment, then sprang hastily from his seat and rushed to the door, exclaiming, "Dogs of the devil! they're out again. Help me to catch them, Pedrillo!"

"Curse the dogs! let them go," said the muleteer.

"Let them go!' repeated the host indignantly. "Let them go!" adding significantly as he disappeared through the door-

way: "When *you* want help, comrade, look elsewhere for it!"

The muleteer reluctantly followed, grinding between his teeth the pleasant epithets of, "Fool! ass! idiot!" as he, too, vanished.

Tornalina also flew to the open door and listened, then turning with a joyful face, she exclaimed, "Now! now! Lose not a moment, but follow me! Dear and honoured lady!" she added, addressing her female guest, "hasten to quit this inhospitable roof, where your liberty is threatened!"

No farther warning was necessary; they followed her instantly. Pausing again to listen when they had advanced a few steps, Tornalina, clapping her hands in youthful glee, burst into a merry laugh, exclaiming, "Ah, the good dogs! How they go bounding and yelling down the mountain, to do the errand on which I have sent them. Ah! they shall have a good supper when they come back!"

Leading them round the reed fence where Herman had stood a short time before, and across a fold-yard at the back of the house, she said, pointing to a low wooden building, "There, Señor, are your horses and your man! I have no key, but the door is not strong, you must break it open."

To do this, it appeared, had already been tried by Fritz, who, having been made prisoner by stratagem, had been unwearied in his efforts to obtain his liberty; but the door on the inside gave no purchase by which to shake it. The united efforts of master and man were at length successful, and the horses ready-saddled were led forth, but not mounted.

"The path by which we must descend," said Tornalina, "is difficult and dangerous for horses. You must follow me on foot."

Retracing their steps, they once again crossed the fold-yard, passed round the fence and by the door of the house, which she

entered, but staid only a moment to snatch up a piece of white linen, which, placed on her head, mantilla fashion, fell over her shoulders.

With the ready-witted foresight inspired by the strong interest she felt in the fate of the strangers, and which supplied the place of experience in her simple and youthful mind, she foresaw this would be serviceable in her character of guide; for the moon, although still high in the heavens, was at times obscured by heavy clouds, leaving the travellers to grope their way through one of those deep, black chasms which intersect the mountains, on the side of which their path now lay—a narrow ledge of rock, with only level space enough to admit of their passing in single file, and sometimes so steep and broken as to render it almost impassable.

CHAPTER V.

Slowly and cautiously the travellers continued to follow the white and fluttering beacon borne by the youthful guide, who preceded them through the wild and perilous ravine, after stopping to caution and instruct them how to proceed.

As they paused to listen to her instructions at one of those spots of more than common difficulty, where the rock dipped so suddenly and perpendicularly, as to render a descent both difficult and dangerous, she said, "I am grieved to be forced to lead you through such a road, and, in good truth, it is one that has scarcely before been traversed by horses; but I did not dare to

bring you down by any other, lest we should fall in with my uncle and Pedrillo. I knew the dogs would take to the other side of the mountain, for there lie the woods where they are used to hunt."

"And why," said Herman, willing to get a little more information, "should you fear to meet your uncle and Pedrillo?"

"They would endeavour to stop you," she answered; "you would resist. There would be fighting—perhaps bloodshed!"

"What motive have they for wishing to detain us?" again inquired Herman.

"They do not wish to detain *you:* but they know the lady, and hope to benefit by detaining *her.*"

Herman, whose curiosity had been gradually augmenting, longed to say, "Who, then, is the lady?" but the lady herself was at that moment supported by his arm, and must have heard the question had it been uttered. She had not thought fit to make

this known to him, and he felt it would be little in accordance with the delicacy due to her, in her present strange and comfortless position, to make her reveal what perhaps she wished to keep secret.

In a short time they stopped again, for the moon was now wholly obscured by dark and heavy clouds, which covered the sky, and threatened a storm; but the cold was greatly mitigated. A gusty and tempestuous wind swept by at intervals, whistling, or howling, as it forced its way through the narrow fissures of the rocks, or rushed in a broad column through the gully they were traversing.

At length a torrent of rain fell, and they were fain to take shelter under a shelving rock, which fortunately presented a temporary refuge. Five minutes had scarcely elapsed ere the moon again shone out bright and clear, though but for a short time, lighting up the wild scenery around.

The place where they stood was a broad ledge of rock, forming a platform, in front of which rose a group of giant cork trees. At the back it was overhung by a rugged cliff, shelving backward to a narrow rent; but at the entrance, high enough to admit of their standing erect within its cavernous recess, and to contemplate at leisure the scene, where all around was "chaos come again." The black rocks piled on each other in such mighty masses — such rude and shapeless forms, as if nature had collected materials wherewith to form a world, but had not yet applied the moulding hand to fashion them.

"What a scene!" exclaimed the lady, as the stormy wind again swept by, the cork trees bending and quivering as it passed along. "This is nature in her stern and sterile grandeur. Wild, lone, and desolate, yet how sublime! I would not for the world have lost a scene like this!"

There was a glow upon her cheek, a bright enthusiasm in her eye, as she stepped forward into the moonlight to look around, that fixed the admiring gaze of Herman on her; and again, for the twentieth time, he said to himself, "Who is this woman?"

She had advanced to the very verge of the rocky platform. Tornalina stood near him. The opportunity was tempting; forbearance gave way, and curiosity triumphed.

"Who is this lady?" he said to the young Spaniard, in a low voice.

Tornalina, regarding him with a look of bewildered astonishment, after a moment's pause exclaimed, "Mother of mercy! Do you not know? *You*—her guide—her sole protector? If she has not thought fit to tell you this, the blessed Mary forbid I should presume to do so!"

Herman, thus doomed to remain in ignorance, was now anxious to proceed on his journey: but the Spanish maiden opposed it.

"Not yet, not yet," she said. "It is coming again—we could not stand against its fury: 'tis but a mountain *borrasca*, and will soon be over."

As she spoke, the moon was again hidden behind a dark cloud, and another torrent of rain and wind drove them back to the sheltering cave. Scarcely had he retreated as far as the shelving cliff allowed, ere he felt his leg suddenly grasped, and as suddenly released by some one. Not absolutely frightened, but greatly startled, his first idea was that it was some wild animal; and he promptly changed his position to face the spot from whence he had been assailed; but in this dark recess he could see nothing. Fritz was never destitute of flint and steel, and having intimated to him the necessity of reconnoitering, he inquired of Tornalina if there were many wolves in these mountains.

"There are some," she replied; "but they

are seldom found on this side, or so high up, for they would get nothing to eat."

"And bandits?" said Herman, the idea suddenly suggesting itself that this place was a most proper spot for the retreat of robbers.

"Ah! they say so. The peasants of the valleys tell marvellous stories at times about them: but I believe more than half of them are untrue. The mountains are not more unsafe than other places."

As she uttered this, thanks to the operations of Fritz, a heap of dried leaves and branches from the cork trees, which had been driven by eddying winds to the back of the cave, or collected by some benighted traveller for a bivouac, took fire. A bright blaze lighted up the wild cavern and the group which occupied it. To heighten the romantic interest of the scene, scarcely had the leaves caught fire, when, with a scream of terror, the unknown assailant scrambled

from her retreat and stood among them, in the form of a pale, emaciated female, with an old and tattered *mantilla* thrown over her head and shoulders, the rusty black colour of which gave an almost ghastly expression to her pallid cheek and wild and wandering eye.

"Ah! it is Monna, poor Monna Daras!" exclaimed Tornalina.

On hearing her name pronounced, the woman turned her eyes towards her, and apparently recognised her, for she crept to her side and ceased to tremble.

"What art thou doing here, so far from home?" inquired Tornalina.

"I was trying to find the way to heaven," she answered quietly. "Teresa and Perez are always quarrelling about it. I have inquired of Padre Pablo and Lopez, of the *religiosas* of Santa Catarina, but none of them seem to know; so, as the moon was up, I thought I would go to the top of the

mountain and try to find the right road myself. But it was very cold and I was weary. I think I must have been asleep; I will go on now."

"Not to-night, Monna. It is too late. Thou must return with me, my poor Monna!" said Tornalina, in a tone of gentle kindness.

The female quietly acquiesced in this proposal; and, as the storm had passed, they all quitted the cave together. The rain had unfortunately added another difficulty to their path, by covering the rock in places with a thin coating of wet and slippery clay. Fortunately the distance was short: in less than half-an-hour they were again on the high road; and Tornalina, giving them all necessary directions, prepared to take her leave.

"Surely, maiden, thou wilt not again traverse that dreadful road—and alone, too? Come with us rather, we will take care of thee!" exclaimed the lady.

"I humbly thank you, madam," she replied; "but I must not leave my uncle thus. I must return, but not by the same path. I could not climb unaided those steep and difficult places perhaps. Fear not for me, madam, I have none for myself. I am a native of the mountains, and not wholly without defence," she added, smiling, as she drew a short dagger from her belt. "I am most happy to have guided you so far safely on your journey."

"Well, *ma mignonne*, thou shalt do as thou willest," said the lady. "But I am greatly beholden to thee. If I live we shall meet again. But tell me, maiden," she inquired in a low voice, as Tornalina respectfully kissed her hand, "who is this unhappy creature?"

"She is one of the new light people, madam," she replied. "Harmless and quiet, but who has lost her reason in consequence of the terrible disputes among her children

and relations on religious subjects. Her home is in the *Val de Puercos*, at the foot of the mountains."

The travellers now mounted, and continued their journey at a rapid rate till the moon went down, when they were obliged to slacken their speed, not only on account of the darkness, but also for the sake of their horses, which began to show symptoms of distress.

In a short time the darkness gave place to the gray twilight of returning day, and they found themselves nearly at the base of the mountains, with a sandy plain lying before them, traversed by a narrow stream, across which extended a wooden bridge. At length this bridge was passed, and Herman turning to the lady with a joyful face, exclaimed, "God and the blessed Mary be praised, madam, we are now within the French dominions!"

The lady bent her head in silence, as if

mentally joining in the thanksgiving; but her face was grave and sad. After a short time she said, looking round her, "Once again I am on my native soil. Dear, unhappy France! once so proud, so distinguished among the nations—now weeping and desolate, trailing her banner in the dust—her laurels withered—her king a captive—her chivalry destroyed. Fatal, fatal to my poor country was the battle of Pavia!"

Again she relapsed into silence, until some low straggling houses were passed, and they were approaching the walls of Oleron; when on Herman's saying, "Passports will be demanded here," she replied, "Yes," but added nothing more, and appeared to be absorbed in thought.

It was yet early morning when Herman stopped before a house at the entrance of the town to deliver his passport to the officer who demanded it. After examining it with great attention, looking up from time

to time to see that it tallied with the appearance of himself and Fritz, he returned it, saying, "It is regular and satisfactory, but there is no mention of any female in it. Your passport, madam!" he added, addressing the lady. "Doubtless you have one?"

To this she replied evasively, "I cannot show a passport, sir. I am a Frenchwoman. Surely you run little risk by admitting a single female into your town?"

"I am allowed no discretionary power in this respect, madam," said the officer. "My orders are positive to admit no one without a passport. You come from Spain, or Navarre, which is now nearly the same; we look for nothing good from that quarter. If you have no passport you cannot enter the town."

"I have a passport," she said, after a moment's hesitation, "but I have weighty reasons for refusing to produce it, and I request you will send me, (guarded, if you

think it necessary,) to the town *bailli* or the military commandant."

"They are both in their beds: you could not see them, even were I disposed to pursue a plan so irregular, madam."

"Let them be called up, sir! Be assured they will show no displeasure, when I explain to them why it has been done."

"I dare say not, mistress," said the officer, with a leering laugh. "No doubt you think your handsome face a sufficient passport to either of these gentlemen. I dare say I should think so myself, if I were in their places. But as I am not so independent, I tell you frankly that I will not run the risk of being placed under arrest, or perhaps dismissed the service — even to oblige you, my beauty!"

The lady coloured at the jeering freedom of this speech, and drew up her head with a graceful, but grave, and somewhat haughty dignity, which appeared to produce its effect,

for he stopped in the middle of a coarse compliment and remained silent. She, on her part, seemed for a moment embarrassed and undecided what to do, but quickly said, "Madame de Merival — the mother of the commandant — does she not reside somewhere in this neighbourhood?"

"Madame la Marquise de Merival resides in *la Rue Haute*," he replied.

"Will you take me to her?" inquired the lady.

The man looked surprised; and, although he refused the request, it was in a civil and respectful tone.

"At any rate, you cannot object to send a message?"

To this he assented.

Taking from her pocket some small ivory tablets, she wrote a few lines and gave them to him. After a short absence he returned, announcing, with a low bow and a most respectful air, that Madame la Marquise

de Merival would come herself to conduct the lady to her house.

"Oh, my good friend, let us pass, I entreat you!" she exclaimed. "Time is precious, and much must necessarily be lost, ere the litter of Madame de Merival can be made ready. Be assured, sir," she added, seeing that he still hesitated, notwithstanding the profound respect with which he now treated her, "be assured, sir, you will better promote the interests of your country by complying with my request, than by refusing it."

The officer made no farther objection; but escorting them himself to the *hôtel* of Madame de Merival, with another low bow departed.

They were ushered into a large saloon. The Marchioness almost immediately entered, and received her guest with a deference as humble as that evinced by Tornalina, although with a polished and courtlike dignity of manner very different from the rustic simplicity of the Spanish maiden.

No sooner had the usual forms of etiquette been observed, and the necessary speeches exchanged, than the unknown lady turned to Herman, and said, with that sweet and gracious smile which so peculiarly distinguished her, "And now I have only my thanks and gratitude to offer my gallant guide and protector, for services which have laid me under a weight of obligation to him. I trust he will not refuse to keep this ring in remembrance of one who owes him so much?"

Herman could not but know this courteous speech was his dismissal. But his curiosity was strongly excited, and he replied, as she drew the ring from her finger, and offered it to him:—

"You must pardon my freedom, madam, if I confess I should be more flattered by being made acquainted with the name of the lady I have had the pleasure of aiding."

"It is but just. Your request is a rea-

sonable one,—your curiosity is—natural," she said, speaking slowly, and with something of hesitation in her manner. "I am —one of the household, and live in the *hôtel* of the Duchesse D'Alençon, the king's sister. I have some little influence at the court of France, and should be most happy to use it, sir, on your behalf. Should you ever need a friend, or aid, inquire for the Lady Marguerite. Do not refuse the ring, as the gift of a lady whom you have served at her need. Who knows," she added, again smiling, "but that, at some future time, it may prove a talisman of sovereign power to help you through a difficulty!"

Herman took the ring, kissed the hand which was extended to him, and, with a low bow, departed; his head, if not his heart, occupied by the lovely and graceful form and face of the Lady Marguerite, no longer his unknown and mysterious protegée.

"What a woman!" he exclaimed, as he quitted the Hôtel de Merival, and slowly passed on to the *auberge* where he proposed to rest, and refresh himself, his man, and the weary steeds, who had all done somewhat hard service during the last day and night.

"What a woman! No wonder she has influence at the court to which she belongs. How fluently she speaks the Spanish language, and German too, which, they say, is guttural and harsh in its sound. Ah, they would not think it so if they heard it issuing from her lips. Latin, too, I am sure she understands. And yet, with all her learning, and the dignity of manner which distinguishes her, she is a gentle feminine creature, a very woman! I should like to know whether she will remain long here, or hasten forward on her journey to Paris?"

As he finished this soliloquy, he found himself at the entrance of the *auberge;*

when, forgetting both hunger and fatigue, instead of entering, he flung the bridle, as he dismounted, to Fritz, and hastily returned, on foot, to *la Rue Haute.*

The inhabitants of the Hôtel Merival appeared to be in considerable commotion. Doors were opening and shutting; servants running in and out. Presently the great gates of the court-yard were thrown open, and another of those cumbrous machines called carriages came forth.

Within it sat the Lady Marguerite, the Marchioness de Merival, and a young man in a military uniform. It was drawn by six strong horses, and surrounded by a host of outriders in the splendid livery of the house of Merival. As it passed rapidly through the gates, and dashed off at a gallop, a low bow from a gentleman in a general's uniform, (and who Herman ascertained was the commandant,) was returned by the lady with a smiling and graceful bend of the

head. But quickly the smile vanished, giving place to a grave and pensive expression. The next moment her eye kindled and her cheek dimpled again, as she caught sight of Herman, and again she bent her head in sign of salutation. He saw, too, by the motion of her lips, and her leaning forward, that she addressed some words to him as the carriage rushed by: but the motion was too swift to admit of his catching their import; and in another minute the whole cavalcade had disappeared.

"What a woman!" he again repeated, as once more he slowly returned to the inn he had so hastily quitted. Fortunate it certainly was for Herman that the Lady Marguerite no longer remained in the town, since it was necessary that he should leave it; for, as faithful historians, we are bound to confess his head was so filled with thoughts of her that his heart also was in some danger of deserting its lawful

sovereign and going over to the enemy. For Herman was already a lover, and a very devoted one, according to the creed of man, which does not absolutely and sternly forbid occasional wanderings; the heart of man being a capacious mansion, where there is room for many.

The next three days, as he traversed the naked vineyards, and the russet woods of Gascony and Auvergne, on his way to Germany, he thought of little else save the graces and accomplishments of his late protegée.

But, as he entered Alsace, the scenery through which he passed became widely different; and, with its altered features, changed the current of his thoughts. As he approached Strasburg, and caught a view of the Rhine, the image of the Lady Marguerite began to fade, and give place to one less brilliant, but longer known and more firmly established in its empire over his heart.

By the time he arrived in the duchy of Baden, (then a part of the Palatinate,) where lay his and her home, he had discovered that his gentle and interesting cousin, Blanche, was, altogether, a more lovely and loveable creature than her temporary rival; and so impatient he became again to behold her and a home from which he had been absent more than a year, that he scarcely allowed himself time for refreshment or repose.

At length he caught sight of the Neckar, in the neighbourhood of which lay Kohlhof and Felsenberg, the domains of his ancestors, and his own early haunts.

Herman, descending from a mixed race, half German half French, resembled both in some degree. Open-hearted, sincere, and honourable as the former, he possessed also much of the gay vivacity and agreeable amenity of manner which distinguish the latter.

Kind and affectionate in his disposition, and fondly attached to his family, his heart warmed and his eyes sparkled at the thought of the meeting so soon to take place. Sixteen months had elapsed since he had seen any of them, and they had received no intimation of his coming; for in those steamless and mail-coachless days, the passage of letters was uncertain and precarious.

"How pleased they will be to see me!" he said to himself, as he slowly climbed the mountain road. "My mother, my dear mother, she will be wild with joy! Gertrude, too, that romping, laughing sister of mine—she must be now seventeen; and Blanche, *my* Blanche; my betrothed, my affectionate Blanche!"

His soliloquy now ceased, and he sank into one of those reveries to which lovers are addicted. He had now attained an elevation which commanded a full view of

the Neckar flowing rapidly over its rocky bed, and hemmed in by mountains rising steeply on each side, with the town of Heidelberg reposing in their gorge.

The day had been bright and warm, and, although so late in the year, the setting sun was shining on the castle, burnishing its windows and lighting up the masses of red sandstone with which it is built; displaying, in all their beauty, its terraces and gardens, stretching along the mountain side, covered with vines and woods, which yet bore their autumnal colouring, and gave variety to the landscape.

The scene was splendid and beautiful. It recalled to the mind of the traveller the transactions of his boyish days—the sorrows and the joys of childhood; for in this neighbourhood had he been born, and here had passed events which, occurring in early life, make the strongest impression on the memory. He thought of his father—of his

death. His mother, like himself, descending from a mixed race, half French half German, like him, too, inherited the qualities which characterize them both: but in her they were marked by excess.

To describe her, I must be allowed to say that, though born in Germany and educated in France, she was, in character and disposition, a true Irishwoman; warm-hearted, generous, affectionate, but rash, impetuous, and imprudent; loving those she loved with her whole heart, and hating those she hated with her whole soul; ready to sacrifice herself to benefit a friend, or—injure an enemy. Possessing considerable ability, her understanding was, nevertheless, often obscured; for the heart governed the head. She suffered herself to be duped and deceived by persons very inferior to herself in intellect, because they found means to interest her affections.

Left in her early youth an orphan heiress,

she had, at the age of fifteen, bestowed herself, and the estates she inherited from her ancestors, with the title of Graf von Felsenberg, (which, as her husband, he assumed by right of the tenure by which the estates were held as a fief of the empire,) on a Frenchman, with little more to recommend him than a handsome face and a name not yet dishonoured. So persevering were the efforts of the new made count in the pursuit of pleasure, that, at the birth of Herman, the heir, the property was already seriously embarrassed. Two more years scarcely elapsed when the Graf von Felsenberg found himself compelled, like many other improvident people, (falsely called generous, liberal,) to resort to expedients the meanest, most degrading and dishonest, in order to supply his reckless expenditure.

Fortunately for his family, a career which threatened them with utter ruin, was suddenly terminated. He had taken up his

abode at a hunting lodge in the Odenwald, where a fatiguing chase had been succeeded, as usual, by a gross debauch, during which the building was set on fire. Helpless from intoxication, abandoned by his servants and companions, who could only have secured his safety by risking their own, (which none were disposed to do,) he perished in the flames; leaving the Gräfin, at the age of twenty, a widow, with a son and daughter, to struggle with the poverty and privations he had bequeathed them.

The loss of such a man could not be much lamented. The widow put on her weeds with an air of calm resignation; the vassals and dependents openly rejoiced. A few years of economy and good management, on the part of a faithful steward, restored something like its original prosperity; and the castle of Felsenberg became once again the abode of peace, comfort, and rational hospitality.

At the age of sixteen, Herman, as a vassal of the empire, donned the military costume, and became a soldier. Young and inexperienced as he was, he had, nevertheless, found means to distinguish himself at the battle of Pavia, where the army of the young Emperor, Charles the Fifth, had so completely triumphed.

CHAPTER VI.

Just as the sun sank below the horizon, Herman stopped at a little *bierhaus* or inn by the roadside, from which came forth, what is often found in Germany, the female hostler, with a knife and a huge brown loaf, from which she proceeded to cut slices and feed the weary horses.

The little inn was on his mother's domain, and he began to question this nymph of the stable and the stall, with an anxious face and a beating heart, relative to the inmates of the castle.

This tremulous hail of the long-absent mariner, just entering his native port, was answered with the welcome "All's well!" and again he rode on with a rejoicing spirit,

and a sparkling eye. It was dark ere he reached his home. He alighted in the court-yard, passed on to the entrance, and without being recognised was informed that the Gräfin and the young ladies were in the saloon; and he was about to give a fictitious name for announcement, but the ancient domestic, after gazing at him for a moment with a doubtful face, uttered a cry of joy, and was hurrying forward to communicate the glad tidings, when Herman stopped him, and stepping past him, entered the room and closed the door.

His mother was sitting with her elbow on the table, her head leaning on her hand in a thoughtful attitude. At the same table sat Gertrude and Blanche, occupied with some needle-work. Herman stood still, contemplating the loved group, when Blanche looked up, turned pale and trembled, but said not a word. Her agitation apparently attracted the attention of the Countess, for

she turned sharply round, and fixed for a moment a half-doubting, keenly inquiring eye on him, as he stood near the door; then springing from her seat with a wild cry, rushed across the room, flang her arms round his neck, and burst into a passion of tears and sobs, that seemed to shake her frame.

Herman, affectionately caressing her, continued to support her for some time, for she appeared to be quite unable to support herself; and then placing her on a seat, turned to look for Blanche; but Blanche had disappeared. His sister stood beside him, with a face like an April morn, covered with smiles and tears. A warm greeting was hardly exchanged between them when their attention was recalled to their mother, who had now again sunk back on her seat in a paroxysm of convulsive sobbing.

"Mother! dear mother!" he said, affectionately kissing her hand and bending over her, "restrain yourself. Those sobs and

tears bear the semblance of grief, rather than joy. Are you grieved that I am come back to you?"

"No, — oh no! I am glad—very glad. Yes, I am — rejoiced to — to see you," she replied slowly, as if gasping for breath.

"Check your tears then, mother," he said gravely, "if you would not have me think I am an unwelcome guest."

"I will! I will!" she said, struggling for composure. "God bless you, my boy! I was overpowered by the sight of you so unexpectedly," she added when she was somewhat calmer: but her lips still quivered, and her eyes filled with tears, as she fixed them on him at times during the evening.

Herman was puzzled to account for such a reception. He knew the ardent and impetuous character of the Countess, and he was prepared for some outbreak of emotion at the sight of him on her part. But never before had he seen joy expressed in a manner

bearing so strongly the stamp of sorrow, as that she had shown this evening; and, on her quitting the room for a short time, he questioned his sister on the subject of her health.

"Has our mother been ill?" he inquired, "or has any thing occurred to disturb her?"

"N–o," she replied with something of hesitation in her manner. "I think her health has been pretty good, but you came upon us so suddenly."

"This, then, I suppose," he observed, "is the reason why Blanche also has fled, without offering me a word of welcome. Really it seems that women are strange creatures, who either run away or go into fits at the sight of those who are dear to them, unless they have due notice of their approach."

The Gräfin now returned, and supper was served. As they were about to take their places at table, Blanche entered. Herman, who had been anxiously watching

for her, advanced and took her hand, saying in a low voice, as he led her forward, "Am I so wholly forgotten that you have not even a look of welcome to bestow upon me, Blanche?"

She blushed, but neither spoke nor raised her eyes.

Many and interesting were the inquiries made and answered, by the different members of the family during the supper, and for many hours after it; each had so much to ask, so much to tell, (except Blanche, who scarcely spoke, and soon again retired,) that it was long past midnight ere they separated.

Notwithstanding the late hour at which he had gone to bed, Herman was up again early in the morning, anxious to revisit the scenes endeared to him by the recollection of his childhood. It was a cheerful bracing morning. Bright, if not warm, sunbeams were sparkling on the frosty efflorescence

that covered the fading foliage of the woods; for, in this airy and elevated spot, the season was far less advanced than in the sunny regions he had lately passed. The fallen leaves, crisped by the frost, rustled under his feet, and the birds were flitting from bough to bough.

Presently the well-known sound of the swine-herd's horn saluted his ear, and he followed almost mechanically the herd, as he had often done in childhood, to see them disperse in the forest in search of their food,—the acorns, the beechmast, and chestnuts, with which it abounded.

The dairy-women came forth with their pails, in search of the kine, and the bleachers bearing baskets of linen to the bleaching ground on the "*Engelswiese:*"[1] the hunts-

[1] *Engelswiese*, (the angel's meadow,) a green field on the mountains in the neighbourhood of Heidelberg, where, according to a traditionary tale, an angel alighted in a visit to earth, to save a poor but honest man, sorely assailed by the evil one.

man, with his baying hounds, also bearing away for the woods, in search of game to supply the lady's table; the falconer with his hawks, bent on the same errand, but directing his course to the open plain, where no tree gave shelter to the quarry.

All seemed fresh and fair, and welcome to the eyes of the young heir. Every object, animate and inanimate, interested and delighted him.

With friendly kindness, and a gay and smiling face, he saluted the humble dependants of his house, as they passed to their daily occupations; and with a joyous spirit he returned to the castle to seek again those who were yet more dear to him.

As he entered the room where the breakfast was placed, he saw that his mother and sister were standing on the lawn before the open window, occupied apparently with some plants. A little apart from them also stood Blanche. Unseen by them, he re-

mained some time silently commenting on their appearance.

"Blanche!" he said to himself, "my pretty Blanche is grown taller and more womanly, since I saw her last. Gertrude, too, how her slight form is filling up, and swelling into the roundness of womanhood! But with their girlish form they seem to have lost much of their girlish gaiety. There is a gravity in the faces of both, to which I am unaccustomed, and I do not like the change! My mother! my dear mother, how young and handsome she still is! She looks like the elder sister of the others; but she is paler and thinner, I think, than when I left her. Where could one find three such women?" he exclaimed aloud, with affectionate exultation, as he bounded through the open window and stood beside them.

Another joyous greeting passed between them, and they returned together to seat themselves at the breakfast table — to ask

and to answer in turn ten thousand new questions alike interesting to all. But Blanche again took little part in the conversation, and as soon as the breakfast was finished, hastily left the room. The Countess soon after also left them, and Gertrude and Herman were again alone.

Surprised and somewhat piqued, at what appeared like a systematic avoidance of him, on the part of his betrothed, Herman determined to have an explanation, and sent Gertrude to request an interview. In a short time she came, something paler than usual, he thought, but with a grave and quiet face.

"Blanche," he said, taking her hand, "have you forgotten that this was pledged to me at parting? I am come to claim it! Are you prepared to fulfil your promise?"

She looked up at him earnestly, but hesitated, and seemed undecided how to reply; at length she said, — "I think it

would be better to wait. We are both very young."

"We are nearly a year and a half older than when you consented to accept me for your future husband," he replied. "You are not sincere with me, Blanche. You have some other motive for proposing delay. Has any obstacle arisen with which I am unacquainted, to render our union less desirable?"

After a pause of silence, she said, "Our relative position is altered since you were here before. You have distinguished yourself in the army, and are said to be favoured by the Emperor. The Gräfin may no longer wish to see you united to a nearly portionless girl."

"And is this your only reason for wishing our marriage to be postponed?" he inquired, fixing a scrutinizing eye upon her face. "Look up and answer me."

She did look up, but *her* eye said nothing, —it made "no sign,"—nor did her lips for

some time. At length she said, "No! I have no other objection."

"I am to understand, then, that if my mother make no objection to our union, you also consent to it?"

Again, with an earnest look and an anxious face, he waited for an answer, which came, after another pause, in a faint "Yes," coldly, almost reluctantly, uttered.

But little satisfied with this interview, he repaired to what was called his mother's morning-room. He found her seated at a table covered with rolls of linen and woollen cloth, which two women were cutting up into garments of different sizes and shapes. She sat in precisely the same attitude as that in which he had first seen her on his arrival; her head leaning on her hand, her face wearing the same look of deep thought. As he entered, she roused herself and gaily inquired whether he came to make one of the petticoat council. "No, mother," he

replied, as the two women quitted the room, "I am come on a more serious, more important errand."

The smile with which she had addressed him faded from her face, and was replaced by a disturbed and uneasy expression, as she looked at him with a gaze of eager but mute inquiry.

"You know," he said, "that I am betrothed to Blanche. I come to tell you, I am anxious our marriage should take place now, before I be again called away by military duty. Peace being now established between France and the Emperor, I may reasonably reckon on staying with you some months. Therefore I consider no fitter time than the present can be found."

She remained silent some time after he ceased speaking, but at length said, "Herman, this affair should be first discussed with Blanche. Hear first what she says to this arrangement!"

"I *have* heard what she says. I have her consent, provided you make no objection."

"Indeed!" she said, with an air of surprise. "Has Blanche consented to become your wife?"

"Why should you be so surprised at this?" he inquired.

Finding she made no answer, he added, "She *has* given her consent; I now request yours."

"Herman, you deceive yourself. Be assured Blanche neither wishes, nor will agree to this marriage."

After a pause, she added, "Nor do *I* now wish it to take place, for I now believe it would not make either of you happy."

"And why not? What has occurred to render it less desirable now, than it was a year since?"

"If the consent of Blanche should be feigned. — You would not make a woman

your wife, who married you unwillingly, and who did not love you?"

"No, not if she were a princess!" he said, hastily. "But why do you think Blanche has ceased to love me? For surely her affection was mine. Have I a rival? Has her heart been won from me during my absence? Have I a rival?" he repeated, impetuously. "I will not listen to surmises. Do you *know* I have a rival,—that she loves another?"

A low and faltering "No," uttered in a husky voice, and with a heightened colour on her cheek, was the answer made by the Countess to this question.

"Mother," he said, anxiously, with an earnest gaze fixed on her changing countenance, "you are not candid with me. You do know,—what you will not tell me. You are not frank with me."

"My dear Herman," she replied, "I can tell you nothing. I *believe* Blanche has no

wish to complete her engagement. If I am wrong, you will soon be able to ascertain the fact. Be content to wait a little, and judge for yourself."

Vexed and dissatisfied, he now sought his sister, hoping to obtain from her some elucidation of an affair that appeared to be enveloped in mystery. He found her with her bonnet and cloak on, prepared for a walk, in which he gladly joined her. They had scarcely quitted the house, ere he said, — "Tell me, Gertrude, I entreat you, do you think Blanche is still attached to me, or have I been superseded in her affection during my absence from Felsenberg?"

"Indeed, I know not, Herman," she replied. "I am not in her confidence."

"Not in her confidence! Why, you scarcely decided on the colour of your curl-papers formerly without a mutual consultation. What has made this change?"

"Blanche is much altered since you left

us. She is become more grave, and less communicative, and passes much of her time alone."

"Be it so! She has told you nothing. But you have eyes and ears: have they told you nothing? Do you not know that some one has stolen her affections?"

"No," said Gertrude, "I do not. Once I thought so; but I found I was mistaken."

"Indeed! You think then she still loves me?" said he, the deep gloom on his face changing to a bright smile.

"N-o,—I don't know,—I can't tell," she said, speaking slowly and reluctantly.

"You are like my mother!" he exclaimed, impatiently. "You know, and you do not know. You torture me with the doubts you raise; you vex and harass me with insinuations, and yet will tell me nothing by which I might hope to explain them."

"Dear Herman," said Gertrude, greatly distressed by his agitation, and the gloomy

shade which again clouded his face, "What can I say? for indeed, indeed, I *know* nothing; and as to vague fears and surmises, what would it avail to make you acquainted with them?"

"Much, much!" he answered. "Through them I might find a clew to this mystery. For something mysterious there is in the manner of both my mother and Blanche."

"Well, Herman, I admit there is, and perhaps it is better I should tell all I can, that you may form your own opinion on the circumstances. The blessed Mary knows it will be a great relief to me to do so—to have some one to whom I may utter my thoughts, my suspicions, my fears. I should at once have spoken to you on the subject; but I thought it would be cruel and unkind to raise doubts and suspicions in your mind, when perhaps, with a little patience, all would come right again. But you shall hear all I can tell you.

"Very soon after you left us, about a week, I think, Madame de Mühlhausen came to make us a visit. You know she seldom moves without some gentleman in her train. On this occasion she had two. She presented them as the Chevalier de Sablons and Monsieur Durochet, both from France, travelling for amusement, and then on a visit to the Baron, her husband. De Sablons is young, very handsome, of polished and prepossessing manners, accomplished, and clever. In fact, a man few women could resist, I think, if he determined to win their affection."

"You speak warmly, Gertrude," said Herman, looking at her earnestly. "You describe a dangerous man; you have found him such?"

"Alas, yes, I fear so!" she said, with a sigh.

"Why should you fear it? Is he not a gentleman? Madame de Mühlhausen would

surely not have presented him had he been a low-born or meanly-connected man."

"Oh, no; of course not. It is not on that account I fear him. Madame de Mühlhausen spoke of him, and his friend Durochet, as men of family and fortune, whose estates lay in Alsace and Franche Comté, and evidently entertained a high opinion of them both!"

"Well, then," said Herman, "if he be of good birth, rich, handsome, and accomplished, what, in the name of all the saints, would you have more, and why should you be afraid of loving him?"

"Of loving him!" she repeated, staring at him with astonishment; "of loving *him! I* love him?—no! I hate, but I also fear him."

"For the mercy of Heaven, Gertrude," he said, impatiently, "go on with your tale; for, instead of clearing up the mystery which seems to envelop the whole family, it deepens

on me at every step I make for its investigation. Go on, I beseech you!"

"Well, then," she continued, "as I was telling you, he and his friend Durochet, a pleasant and gentlemanly man in his manners and appearance, but no otherwise distinguished, and at least ten years older than his companion, who cannot be more than five or six-and-twenty;—these gentlemen, arriving in the train of La Baronne de Mühlhausen, stayed the whole day with us, and made themselves so welcome by their gaiety, good humour, and conversational powers, that we were all charmed with them. That they were equally prepossessed in our favour, was evident by the frequent repetition of their visits. They also greatly admired the romantic beauty of our mountain scenery. Numerous parties were made for the purpose of seeing the most remarkable places, and scarcely a day elapsed without a meeting.

"A month passed in this way, while they continued to reside at Elsenbach, as the Baron's guests, when they declared their intention of remaining some time amidst the splendid magnificence of 'this home of the picturesque, the sublime, and the beautiful,' as the Chevalier designated our wild, forest-clad mountains. For this purpose, they established themselves at the village of Langendorf, which, being midway between Elsenbach and our house, facilitated their intercourse with the two families. Often, now, they passed whole days with us, and, when the weather was bad, stayed all night. About this time, I began to think Blanche's affection for you had somewhat cooled. Although still greatly interested in all that related to you, she had ceased to regret your absence. She came no more (as she had done when you first left us) to my bedside, to sit and talk of you, and sometimes weep,

for hours after I was in bed, before she retired to her own.

"I half suspected that one of these strangers had made her inconstant; but nothing transpired to confirm the suspicion. Their attentions were so equally divided between my mother and her, that no one could say which was preferred. That the handsome Chevalier greatly admired Blanche, I knew by the sparkling of his eyes at her approach, and sometimes a sort of involuntary exclamation of delight at the sight of her; still ——"

"No doubt! Yes. No doubt he admired her. Who would not?" exclaimed Herman, breaking in upon the narrative. "He has seduced her affection. I see it all now. Her indifference, her avoidance of me, my mother's mysterious manner, — fickle, faithless woman," he added bitterly, while his eyes were filled with tears. "Why should I regret the loss of one so light, so ready

to change, to forget the solemn vows she pledged to me?"

"You are too hasty in your judgment, Herman. I do not *now* believe that Blanche loves him, although I acknowledge I once thought she did. Indeed, I am sure she does not, from some expressions I heard her utter a short time since, which spoke any thing but love."

"How, then, do you account for her conduct, and what is the meaning of all this mystery?" said he, hope again reviving in his heart.

"I have already told you I cannot account for it: that I can give no explanation. I can only relate what I have seen and heard. You must yourself draw the inferences. Let me go on."

"Do — do! Let me hear all," he said, relapsing into gloomy silence. Then, as if he had found some sudden relief, he added, "If Blanche spoke slightingly of him, she

cannot care for him. Whatever other faults she may possess, insincerity, dissimulation, is not among them."

"No, surely not. Blanche is sincere, upright, and honourable." She then continued:—"This constant intercourse between these strangers and our family had been established some time before I perceived that the Chevalier had obtained an extraordinary influence over my mother, that she was almost entirely guided by his counsel and advice. I knew this influence had been obtained principally by the great interest he appeared to take in your fate and fortune, and which he had tact enough to perceive was the most direct road to my mother's heart, perhaps also to mine and Blanche's.

"They had always appeared to regard me as a child, and, I think, suffered me to see and hear many things they would not have allowed others to see and hear. I

was much given, as you know, to romping and laughing; and I believe I passed for a foolish creature, not quite idiotical, perhaps, but something bordering on it.

"The Chevalier de Sablons affected to hold a very high code of morality, and sent forth, from time to time, very fine phrases on the subjects of Virtue, Honour, Constancy, &c. One day that he had given utterance to some very high-flown sentiment, with a very grave face, Durochet put his handkerchief to his mouth to hide a laugh which I saw revelling in his eye, as he directed a glance towards his friend; who, in his turn, was obliged to cover his face and cough, to account for the shaking of his frame, which was convulsed with laughter.

"From that time I watched them both: for I began to change my opinion of them, to believe them hypocrites, and to tremble at the daily increasing influence they were obtaining in our house. Once again, a little

while after, I detected the same excess of risibility, which they endeavoured to hide, at the mention of an uncle of the Chevalier, in the service of the Emperor, of whom they had often spoken as possessing great power with his imperial master, and which power was to be employed for your benefit. In short, I began to entertain a very ill opinion of them; and I tried hard to infuse a little of my suspicion into the mind of my mother: but I never succeeded. She believed them your friends, and that secured their power over her.

"Thus passed the winter. With the sunshine and the flowers of returning spring were resumed our excursions about the neighbourhood. One day, in the beginning of May, we had climbed to the top of a mountain, all except my mother, who complained of fatigue, and seated herself at a distance from the summit, under some trees. Monsieur de Sablons immediately descended

again, and seated himself beside her. We were all somewhat weary, and were comfortably reclining on the ground, with the splendid landscape spread before us. But I had now made it my business to watch these traitors,—for such I believed them to be; and I also returned to the same place, where, thanks to the shelter of the woods, I could see without being seen. My mother's face was radiant with joy at the contents of a letter he was reading to her. As he finished reading he kissed her hand, and I saw her eyes were full of tears. Curious to know what could have occasioned such emotion, and relying on my character of romp for an excuse for my frolic, I crept softly behind them, and, snatching the letter from his hand, ran off to read it.

"He instantly pursued me, and forced it from me with unmanly violence, and an air absolutely savage. His handsome features

were distorted with rage and malice, and when he again held the letter in his hand, there was a fiend-like grin on his face, and an expression in his eye that was frightful. He took the letter from me, but not till I had read it."

Here Gertrude paused, was silent a moment, and then burst into a hearty fit of laughter. Herman looked at her with astonishment. When she had recovered her gravity, she continued :—

"The letter which occasioned such powerful emotion, and filled my mother's eyes with tears, I protest, Herman, that letter was neither more nor less than a tailor's bill !"

And again she broke forth into a merry peal, in which Herman now joined her. Notwithstanding the doubts and perplexities by which he was beset, there was something so ridiculous in this transaction, that it was quite impossible to resist it.

Let the Chesterfields say what they will

on the subject, I maintain that a hearty laugh is "a great medicine." No "blue devils" can stand against it. Only shake a man's sides, by tickling his fancy, and the demon of melancholy flies at once. This was the case with Herman. The laugh was beneficial to him. He saw things in a more cheerful light; and he listened quietly as she continued her relation of circumstances.

"My spirit was roused by his violence. I went straight to my mother, and told her the truth. She laughed at the ridiculous conceit, as she named it; called me madcap and foolish romp; but gave no credence to my assertion. I said seriously, 'Mother, I entreat you to believe me! I am not jesting. I know not what you have been told that letter contains; but I solemnly declare there is no mention of any thing, save articles of dress, with the prices of each attached in ducats, crowns, and deniers: nothing whatever, except velvet doublets

with satin puffings and slashed sleeves, trunk hosen, double facings, bodkins, points, and fringes.' I spoke earnestly, for I wished to convince her. But I did not succeed, for I could not prevail on her to insist on seeing the letter.

"From this time they were more on their guard with me, and Durochet began to be very assiduous in his attention to me. Whether for the purpose of concealing the tactics of his friend from my observation, or that the man really had the misfortune to conceive a liking for me, I know not; but certainly, if it were the latter, he was much to be pitied, for never did lover thrive less. I disliked them both; and I took no pains to conceal my sentiments.

"Affairs went on thus some months. Blanche seemed greatly altered. She was silent, uncommunicative, and at times I thought I saw that she was unhappy. One morning, as she was about to quit the room

after breakfast, a paper fell from her dress, which my mother picked up, and, calling to her, held it carelessly in her hand without looking at it. But as Blanche turned and hastily advanced to take it from her, my mother suddenly withheld it, saying, 'Your face evinces that this is no common paper, Blanche. You should be more careful of such precious documents.'

"As she said this, she turned her eyes to the paper, looked surprised, hastily unfolded it, and read a part of the contents. The blood flushed in her face; she became crimson: then ebbed and left it pale as death; and she sank back on her seat, overpowered with agitation. Amazed, I looked at Blanche. She, too, was pale, trembling, and scarcely able to stand.

"Again my mother's face flushed, and her strength seemed suddenly to return. Crushing the paper in her hands, she arose from her seat, and taking Blanche by the

arm, without uttering another word, drew her from the room."

"Blessed Mary!" exclaimed Herman. "By whom could that paper have been written? It would seem as if—as if——. Do you not know whose writing my mother recognised? Could they be rivals?—my mother and my wife?" he said in a voice so low as to be almost inaudible.

"No, no. I think not!" replied Gertrude. "I know nothing certainly; but I think not. Dear Herman, be calm, and let me tell you all I can. My mother and Blanche were shut up together for nearly three hours, and what passed I know not; but once, in my anxiety to see what they were doing, as I approached the door, I heard Blanche sobbing in great grief apparently, and from my mother the words, 'A wretch! heartless deceiver!' After they had been some time together, Father Saldorf was summoned, and Blanche quitted

the room, still weeping. I saw neither of them till supper. They were then calm, but evidently unhappy. They ate nothing, and soon retired.

"From that day there was a marked difference in the manner of Blanche and my mother towards each other. My mother, indeed, treated Blanche with the same kindness she had always done; but there was an evident estrangement between them.

"Blanche no longer flew, as she had once done, to render her those little services she had been in the habit of sharing with me, like another daughter, — services she had seemed to regard as privileges, and jealously guarded as such. After this affair, she appeared to regard my mother with a sort of shy timidity, and passed more than half her time alone. My mother also was greatly changed; she lost her gay spirits, became grave and thoughtful. Many times I found her with a melancholy air, deeply

ruminating, and so absorbed as to be unaware of my approach till I roused her by my voice.

"About a week after this transaction, De Sablons and Durochet, who had been some time absent, returned, and came as usual to make us a visit. We were all in the saloon when they were announced. Blanche hastily left the room. My mother, I thought, looked pale, and seemed agitated, although she constrained herself to appear calm. Durochet, after we had sat some time silent, and, as it were, under a sort of general embarrassment, requested me to show him something in the garden. I refused, under the pretext that I was in haste to finish the work with which I was occupied. 'Go, Gertrude,' said my mother, 'and show Monsieur Durochet the bees.' I obeyed; and we were absent nearly an hour. When we returned, her face bore the traces of strong emotion. It was still flushed as with anger;

and yet the feeling most legibly impressed on it was grief. Almost immediately after, they took their leave, announcing their intention of returning to France.

"My mother returned to her room, and I saw her no more till the evening, when I thought she looked unwell; but she would not admit that she was so."

CHAPTER VII.

"I was hardly in bed, when Esther came to tell me my mother was alarmingly ill. I hurried on my clothes; and as I passed Blanche's door, I stopped to beg she would get up and follow me. I opened the door; but, astonished at the scene which presented itself, stood still at the entrance. Blanche, the gentle, quiet Blanche, was standing in the middle of the room, her cheek flushed and her eye sparkling with indignation, looking down with lofty disdain on the Chevalier de Sablons, who was kneeling at her feet!"

Herman groaned. "Oh, tell me no more!" he exclaimed; "I have already heard too much! Faithless, shameless woman!"

"No, no, Herman. You wrong her! On my soul you do! Hear me out. Do not condemn her till you have heard all."

He made no reply; but listened in gloomy silence as she went on.

"Neither of them saw me. Blanche was speaking.—'For *her* sake,' she said, 'I have forborne to rouse the household.' 'Oh, Blanche,' he exclaimed, 'for mercy's sake listen to me for a moment! will you not suffer me to explain?'—'No, sir,' she replied with cold scorn, unmoved by the energy of passion which was depicted in his face. 'I know already how high, how noble, and how pure are your sentiments, and also how well your actions tally with them; and you have dared——' What she would have added I know not, for at this instant De Sablons saw me, rushed past me, and disappeared. 'Ask me no questions, Gertrude,' she said, 'for I can tell you nothing.'—'I came not to

ask questions,' I replied, 'but to tell you my mother is ill.'

"She followed me in silence, and watched the whole night with unwearied patience and affection beside the bed on which my mother lay. She had been attacked by a convulsive shivering, to which had succeeded fever and delirium. Many times she uttered sentences that for me had no meaning; but, from Blanche's changing, suffering face, I believed conveyed ideas and excited feelings that to her were very painful. Towards morning the fever and delirium subsided, and my mother fell asleep. When she awoke, Blanche was sitting at the bedside. 'Blanche, my poor Blanche,' she said, 'I am glad to see thee beside me!' Blanche kissed her hand, burst into tears, and hastily quitted the room.

"What caused the estrangement between them I know not; but I am sure they were, and still are, greatly attached to

each other.——This, Herman, is all I have to tell."

"Well," he said, "I confess I am somewhat relieved. There is much that is strange and mysterious in the conduct of Blanche,—much that tells me my mother is right in the advice she gives me to wait. I shall do so until the strange influence this man appears to have held over her—until these midnight meetings are fully and satisfactorily explained.

"Things do not wear a face so terrible as I feared. Whatever may have been the danger, it appears now to have passed. Whatever may have been the schemes of these gentlemen, they are now apparently abandoned, since they have quitted the country and returned to France."

"Alas, I fear, not!" said Gertrude. "I fear their plans are not relinquished, although their operations are for a time suspended."

"What is it, then, you apprehend, and for whom do you fear?" he inquired, again alarmed. "You say you do not believe Blanche has any regard for this handsome Chevalier?"

"No, no," she said. "It is rather for my mother I am uneasy. I fear—I greatly fear he has designs on her—that he possesses a powerful influence over her. That influence will destroy her comfort. Already she is unhappy; I am sure she is, although she strives to hide it under a false gaiety whenever she thinks herself observed. You know that Father Saldorf went to the baths some time since on account of his health. Two days after his departure, and about a week after these gentlemen had quitted the country, a stranger arrived and requested to see him. On learning his absence, he inquired for my mother. They had a long conference; and when I first saw her after his departure, I was struck

with the terrible change in her face. It was wan and haggard even. She looked ten years older.

"From that time she has been, alas! I am too sure, unhappy—very unhappy. These men are gone; but they will return —too certainly they will. There was an expression of insolent malice in the faces of both—of triumphant villany, I might almost say—when they took their leave, that was stamped on my memory with terrible force. I fear—oh yes, I fear him; —that handsome, fascinating De Sablons! He comes ever to my mind as the bad genius of our family, like a fallen angel delighting in evil, and with untamed ambition seeking to subjugate and to destroy.

"Oh, how I strove to make my mother share my suspicions—my fears; and sometimes I thought I had succeeded in shaking his power over her. But no sooner had he conversed an hour with her, than all his

influence appeared to be restored. Blanche, I am almost sure, although she is so silent and uncommunicative, thinks of him as I do. I say him; because it has always appeared to me that Durochet is merely an agent to aid the other's plans, whatever they may be."

"Heaven be praised," said Herman, greatly relieved by this information relative to Blanche; "Heaven be praised it is no worse! I confess my mind is more easy since I have heard the whole. I do not see things in the light you do, nor do I share your gloomy forebodings. I think I can now understand the state of affairs sufficiently to account for much that before appeared mysterious. My mother is attached to this Chevalier De Sablons, and wishes to marry him. There is nothing extraordinary in this, nor unreasonable. He is, you say, five or six-and-twenty; she is not more than thirty-four,—no great disparity

of age. Handsome and agreeable as she is, it is but reasonable she should wish to marry again. It would be selfish and unjust on our part to attempt to control her."

"Heaven forbid we should wish to control her in any thing!" exclaimed Gertrude. "A kinder, a more affectionate mother, a less selfish woman never existed. Nobody would rejoice more sincerely than I should to see her married to the man of her choice, were there reasonable hopes of happiness for her. But to think of her as the wife of this man—I acknowledge it is a subject on which I cannot speak—I cannot think coolly."

"No, indeed—I perceive you cannot," said Herman, smiling. "You resemble very strongly our mother in this respect. You can neither love nor hate with moderation. A middle course is little palatable to either of you. My mother cannot see a fault in those she loves: she makes angels

of them. You, having conceived a prejudice against this gentleman, turn him into a demon. As to the tailor's bill," he added, laughing, "so ably converted into a battery for the destruction of the besieged fortress —all stratagems, you know, are fair in love and war!"

"Heaven grant I may be wrong in this affair!" she said, with a sigh, "and in my opinion of this man. Most certainly he is my *bête noire*. How do you account for my mother's evident unhappiness?—you who see every thing in a light so cheerful."

"She is struggling against her affection for the Chevalier, because she probably thinks a second marriage will be injurious to the interests of her family, to my interest especially."

"And will it not be so?"

"Perhaps it may. It will reduce my income, probably, and my expectations also. But I have no doubt some arrangement may

be made, satisfactory to all parties," he replied, with a cheerful face. "But tell me, Gertrude, when is the dear old Father Saldorf expected back? I do so miss him!"

"So do we all. We are, however, in hopes soon to have him back among us; for the last accounts of his health were much more favourable."

The conversation now changed to other and less interesting subjects, and soon after they returned home.

CHAPTER VIII.

Two days after the conversation related in last chapter, the brother and sister again set off on a long walk, Blanche having declined being of the party. In the course of their ramble they found themselves in the neighbourhood of Neustift, where dwelt a little religious community, and Gertrude proposed they should enter.

"Willingly!" said Herman. "I have not seen the good old souls for a long time."

They were readily admitted and hospitably refreshed. The good ladies were busy getting in their harvest, that is, gathering and housing the fruit from the orchards and garden, storing up vegetables, honey, and numerous little comforts for the

winter, with which they not only cheered the inmates of their own holy mansion during the cold season, but also furnished a little magazine for the use of the poor in the neighbourhood. Often were the sisters of Neustift seen, enveloped in their gray-hooded cloaks, trotting with a basket on their arm, towards the cottage of the old or the sick peasant: for their seclusion was voluntary; they being bound by no vows save that of celibacy.

When they had rested some time, and listened to a long history of their domestic arrangements, Herman and Gertrude followed sister Waldrada to the garden, where her presence was necessary. After looking at the large bundles of savoury and medicinal herbs, hung up to dry for winter use, and the bee-hives covered with a thatched roof to protect them from the cold, they passed on to the orchard.

Having given the necessary instructions

to those who were gathering the fruit, sister Waldrada led the way to a low door in the wall which bounded the little domain. This door she unlocked and opened, showing a clear and rapid stream murmuring over its rocky bed; and beyond it a beautiful meadow sheltered by forest trees. "That is the piece of ground we have been promised a lease of," she said, with a face beaming with satisfaction, as she pushed back the door and pointed to the field. "Will it not be a charming addition to our orchards?"

"Charming indeed!" replied Gertrude, to whom she more particularly addressed herself. "I think you have been very fortunate in obtaining it."

"Yes," said the good sister. "Many, many years we have been wishing for it; but the Baron de Mühlhausen, to whom we applied, said it could not be had. We did very much wish for it, certainly, and were greatly grieved that we could not get it.

It was our duty to be thankful for the advantages we already possessed, and we did not murmur. The Almighty rewards the meek and patient spirit, and has compassion on the humble. A short time since, Madame de Mühlhausen came to tell us she had spoken to a friend about it, and he had promised her that we should have it. Oh that was a day of jubilee with us!" added the nun with an air of exultation, as she led the way back. "Yes, it was a day of jubilee, when the noble lady came to tell us we were to have the *Wolbachwiese*."

"The *Wolbachwiese!*" exclaimed Gertrude, much surprised. "Is that the *Wolbachwiese?*"

"Yes," replied sister Waldrada, astonished in her turn at the strong interest so suddenly awakened in her guest, on a subject to which she had hitherto listened with indifference, or at most with civil complaisance. "Yes, that is the *Wolwiese*, as the peasants abridge

the name the *Wolfenbachwiese*, as it should be called."

"And who is this friend of the Baron's," inquired Gertrude, "who has promised you a lease?"

"Ah, I forget his name," said Waldrada. "It was a foreign name, I think, and I have a bad memory for strange names."

"Was it"—said Gertrude hesitating. "Was it De Sablons?"

"Yes, yes, that is the name. Do you know him?"

Herman, who had listened in silence to the little dialogue, had been wholly unable to account for the great interest his sister appeared to take in the subject to which it referred, now began to comprehend in some degree its source, and as they returned home after taking leave of the good ladies, he said, "Do tell me, Gertrude, what is the history of this little meadow, the pretty Wolwiese, that you should have been so

startled at hearing it was to be appropriated to the use of the sisters of Neustift?"

"I confess I was startled — more than startled, for I was vexed — sorry — to hear it. But you will not share my vexation and fears, since you have none of what you call my gloomy forebodings. That pretty meadow, which has been disposed of by the Chevalier De Sablons, belongs to our domain —is my mother's property. It is part of a tract of land lately exchanged for a piece of the Kohlhof that intersected the neighbouring estate of Staubeck."

"Ha! — Is it so indeed?" said Herman surprised. "Well, it must be confessed, this Monsieur De Sablons seems pretty certain of succeeding in his suit, since he already exercises a master's right over the property!"

They now walked on in silence, occupied probably by no very agreeable thoughts.

Scarcely another word was spoken till they were again at home.

As they entered the house, they met Blanche with an anxious and melancholy face. She had just quitted Lady Felsenberg's room, who had again been ill. Gertrude hastened to her mother, leaving Herman alone, to occupy himself with his own reflections, which were not just now the most agreeable companions.

Spite of himself and the cheerful light in which he had determined to regard the future, he felt his spirits insensibly sinking. In vain he struggled against the depressing influence that seemed to reign throughout the house. Every thing was changed. Every body in it appeared to *feel* that something was wrong, although no one knew what, or wherefore. The very servants crept about silently, and with anxious faces, as if apprehensive of some unknown danger.

The family, with the exception of the

Gräfin, met at dinner: but the silent meal was soon finished, and again Herman was left alone. As he took his solitary way through his favourite forest haunts, how changed did every thing appear! Scarcely a fortnight had elapsed since his heart had bounded with delight at the sight of his loved home, and its dear inhabitants.

How bright, how beautiful were the rainbow tints which had then coloured all around him. And now dark clouds were brooding o'er the fairy landscape, and changing all to gloom. His mother ill and unhappy. His betrothed, his long-loved Blanche, cold, silent, avoiding him, and he her, as by mutual consent. His gay and laughter-loving sister, changed to a grave and timid prophetess of ill.

"Alas! alas!" he said, "that prospect of the future which looked so bright and fair, was it but the mirage of the desert, which has vanished and left me on a dreary waste?"

Not long, however, could thoughts so sad occupy the mind of one like Herman. Soon, with the natural elasticity of youthful energy, he shook off the despondency every thing around him seemed calculated to inspire, and gaily exclaimed, "I will not yield without a struggle to the power of this evil influence. Like a true knight I will attack the bold enchanter who has thrown his wicked spells over our house! I will go to my mother and ask an explanation of the mystery, which seems to shroud us all in its gloomy folds. And yet I know not well how to do this, on such a subject. No; the explanation must come from her. I must wait: but I will not despond. I will not look forward, boding evil. I will strive to be cheerful, and hope that all may yet be well."

With this reasonable and philosophical determination, he finished his soliloquy, and

went off in search of occupation that might best enable him to execute it.

The next morning, Lady Felsenberg appeared at the breakfast table as usual, and though weak and languid she strove to be cheerful, and smiled occasionally at the droll things Herman uttered in the good-natured attempt to enliven the party. But her smile was like the wintry sunbeam; bright, but not warm. It came not from the heart.

Two days after this, as they were about to separate after breakfast, Barneck, the old steward, entered the room with slow and hesitating steps; evidently the messenger of evil tidings, for his eyes were full of tears. Blanche had left the room: the others still remained; and, as the old man advanced, they all looked up at him with inquiring eyes, but no one seemed disposed to question him.

At length he said, "I have bad news to tell. Father Saldorf——"

Their tongues were simultaneously set free, and as Barneck paused, "What of him?" broke from the lips of each.

"Alas for us whom he hath left behind!" said he. "He is gone to a better place."

"Dead!" exclaimed the Countess. "Father Saldorf dead! my friend! my counsellor! this is another heavy blow!" She burst into tears, and, covering her face with her handkerchief, sank back on her seat and continued to weep in silence; while Barneck related how the favourable symptoms of the malady which had attacked Father Saldorf had suddenly given way to others, indicating the fatal result which had soon after taken place; and he died blessing and praying for the happiness of the family whose spiritual guide he had been, and with whom he had lived so many years in the mutual interchange of kindness and affection.

When the steward had left the room, Lady Felsenberg laid her arms on the table, and hid her face by leaning on them. In this position she sat so long, and so still, that Gertrude (who had been struggling with her own grief, that she might not augment that of her mother) became alarmed. She went to her and said, "Mother! dear mother! Do not abandon yourself to grief. Remember it is the will of God! We should not grieve out of measure."

"Grieve — no!" said she, raising her head. "I know well it is the will of God to remove our dear friend, and I am thankful that his will has been thus made manifest to me."

Gertrude looked at her with astonishment; there was a quiet expression on her face, a calm solemnity, every trace of grief had disappeared, her eye was clear and bright. As she spoke she arose from her seat, stood

a moment gracefully erect, then with a firm, elastic step quitted the room. No signs of weakness and languor remained.

"May the holy saints protect us from such a misfortune!" said Herman, advancing towards his sister; "but I greatly fear this terrible news has shaken our mother's intellect. Her face bore no trace of sorrow. Her eye sparkled, I might say flashed, as she passed me. Yes, it was a flash of triumph; as if she had got rid of an enemy, instead of having lost a dear and respected friend. The influence of Father Saldorf must have become irksome, and have been unwillingly submitted to by her."

"No. Oh no! I am sure it was not so!" said Gertrude. "He was too good, too gentle, too kind; my mother was sincerely attached to him. I saw, as you did, the strange calmness that so soon displaced the expression of sorrow on her face. I know not how to account for it; but there was

nothing like insanity about it. I never saw it more strongly characterized by intelligence, by cool collected intellect."

"It is strange! very strange!" said Herman, musing; and thus the scene ended.

From this time, although the Countess sometimes wept at the mention of Father Saldorf, or as the recollection of the good old priest came to her memory, yet her health mended greatly; she became stronger and more cheerful than she had been for some time past, and affairs wore an air of calm quiet for some days; when one morning, as Herman was returning from the chase, he was met by Barneck, who appeared to have been eagerly watching for him. As the old man approached him he saw by the troubled expression of his face that something was wrong. "*Ach mein Herr!*" he exclaimed, "I am glad you are come, I have been waiting for you a long time. I came to tell you that a messenger—a servant I

believe—of the Chevalier De Sablons, is arrived, with some portmanteaus and packages."

"Well, my good friend," said Herman, somewhat sharply, not much pleased probably with the intelligence, "this is no affair of mine. It is to your lady his arrival should be announced. His master I suppose, is on the road, and will soon be here also. He will be my mother's guest: go to her with the news."

"Alas, sir!" said the old man sorrowfully, "it is because I have already told my lady, and on account of the orders she has given me that I have been so anxiously watching for you, that you may do what I could not: try your influence, sir, I beseech you, and prevail on her to countermand them."

"Why, then, what are the orders she has given?" inquired Herman, surprised.

"I am commanded," he replied, "to send the servant and the packages instantly back

to where they came from, or, at least, to dismiss them from the castle."

"Well," said Herman, "as I told you, this is my mother's affair, not mine, Johann Barneck. She will receive or refuse at her pleasure, the visit of this, or any other gentleman; and suffer his servants and baggage to remain in the house, or send them from it at her option."

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed Barneck, with a deeper shade of trouble and vexation on his face, "you do not, or you will not, understand me! Has my lady," he said, hesitating, "never told you ——"

"Told me what?" inquired Herman, finding nothing followed. "What should she tell me?"

"Good Lord!" said the old man, in great perplexity, "may the saints guide me! What am I to do?"

"I love my lady!" he continued, while the tears filled his eyes and slowly trickled

down his face. "I nursed her before she could walk: I helped to teach her to walk. How she would laugh, and her pretty bright eyes would sparkle, when she had tottered a few steps and caught my knee; and, when she came from France, a fine young lady, what tricks she used to play me, and I only loved her the more for the mischief she did me; for it did me good to hear her merry laugh, and to see the dimples in her cheeks. I have always been with her, and I worked hard to get her out of the difficulties her first husband brought upon her."

"Her *first* husband?" said Herman, in a low voice.

"The Lord be good unto me! I think my old brain is well-nigh addled with all the troubles and vexations that have been, and are like to be. I hardly know what I am talking about."

Herman, who had hitherto shown nothing but impatience to break up a conversation

that was unpleasant to him, and to get away, now stood rooted to the spot. He now thought he saw a solution to the mystery which hung over the house. And yet again, when the strangely inconsistent conduct of his mother came to his recollection, the clouds seemed to thicken round him, and shroud him in deeper darkness.

"Barneck," he said gravely, "tell me what you know, and what you fear. For your lady's sake, tell me all. For thus only shall I know what course to pursue. Is she—is she married?"

"Nay, sir," said the old servant, with some hesitation, "why ask *me* such a question? Is it likely that I should be intrusted with a secret of which you are left in ignorance?"

"What, then, do you wish me to do? and for what purpose do you seek my interference?" inquired Herman, who saw, what-

ever Barneck might know, he was little disposed to tell.

"For the purpose of preventing mischief, to prevent my lady from doing herself an injury, by angering and irritating a man who—who never forgets an injury, as I have been told."

"There is no great injury in refusing a visit," said Herman.

The old man again looked vexed, and repeated impatiently, "A visit! a visit! The Chevalier sent instructions—*orders*—to me, to have stalls ready for his horses, and beds for his friends, and the servants whom he should bring with him. Do you think, sir, he would have sent orders if he did not believe he had a right to be obeyed?"

"Certainly not. But he might mistake the extent of his power, as it appears he has done, since my mother has countermanded these orders. Depend on it he

has overrated his authority, and fancied himself possessed of power which does not exist."

The old man groaned, but remained silent; and Herman continued—"If you are so fearful of irritating this gentleman, why did you not try to dissuade the Gräfin from her purpose?"

"Why did I not try?" again impatiently exclaimed Barneck. "I went down on my knees to her, to entreat her not to persist in this rash and dangerous plan. But she would not listen to me; oh no, she would not let me speak. Go to her yourself, sir. She loves you: she has always loved you better than any thing on the earth. Perhaps you may prevail on her to be more reasonable."

"I will, I will go to her, Barneck," said Herman, much moved with the earnest tone and anxious face of the faithful old servant.

He now left him and went slowly on

towards the house, pondering on what he had heard, and soliloquizing by the way. "My dear, imprudent mother is, I greatly fear, the wife of this man, of whom nobody speaks well: and yet they know nothing of him. It is but prejudice perhaps: I will still hope."

As he entered the house he met Gertrude, and he determined to relate to her what had passed in his conversation with Barneck, and hear what she would advise on the subject.

When he had concluded, she said, "Alas! the affair is worse even than my fears had represented it. This man is her husband. She is already his wife: or he has possessed himself of means by which he can compel her to marry him. Old Barneck is right. She is in his power, and we must try to conciliate, rather than exasperate him. Go to her, Herman, and try to make her more reasonable."

"Would it not be better for you to undertake this office?"

"No, no," she replied. "It is you who can influence her if any one can. My dear unfortunate mother! It was her love for you that has helped to ensnare her. The villain—for such I believe him—won her by his pretended interest in your fate, and the power he affected to possess of promoting your fortune through his relation, the Count de Croy."

"The Count de Croy!" exclaimed Herman. "If he has any interest with him, he cannot be the man you represent him. Are you not all indulging an unfounded prejudice against this gentleman? I begin to hope it may be so. At any rate it will not be difficult to ascertain who and what he is, this Chevalier De Sablons, by an application to the Count himself, to whom I am known, and who is now in Flanders."

"Ah, Herman," she said, "it is difficult

for an honourable heart like yours to believe this man treacherous and deceitful. But ask yourself, do you think my mother would have resolved to renounce and defy him, had she not discovered, although unhappily too late, that he is not what he has represented himself to be."

"I know not what to think," he said. "But one point at least is clear; we must try to keep the peace between them, if possible. I will therefore go to her at once."

He found the Countess in her own room, with a vexed and flushed face, as if she had been angry or agitated. Or it might be that she anticipated an unpleasant discussion from the very grave face of her son, which seldom wore an expression so solemn as that with which he now entered, closed the door, and sat down in silence. She tried to utter some common phrase, but the words seemed to die on her lips. She felt that Herman was come to seek an

explanation—that she was about to be put on her trial. He also was greatly embarrassed. He hardly knew in what way to begin the conversation.

At length he said, "Barneck tells me, mother, that you have ordered him to dismiss the servant, and remove the property of the Chevalier De Sablons from the house. Is not this rather an uncourteous mode of proceeding with a friend?"

"Perhaps it is," she replied; "but this gentleman is not my friend—nor yours, Herman. I have reason to think ill of him, and have resolved to hold no farther intercourse with him."

"But surely there are ways of breaking up an acquaintance of long continuance and great intimacy, as this has been, more decorous, and less violent."

"Doubtless, Herman; but none more prompt and decided, and therefore none so eligible."

"Dear mother," he said earnestly, "be not rash, I beseech you! Think well what you are about to do. If, as I believe, you have given the Chevalier De Sablons rights over your person and property, you cannot cancel them by expelling his servant from your house. You must suffer me to speak openly on this subject, mother."

She was about to interrupt him; but he continued, "First listen to me. Hear what I have to say, I beg of you. Your whole future happiness is at stake, and I must speak plainly to you. You have, as I believe, given this gentleman a right of control over your person and property; and since you have done so you have repented the action, and wish it undone. You have conceived a prejudice against him, founded or unfounded."

The Gräfin made a movement of impatience, but remained silent.

"But I entreat you to consider that, however irksome to you may be the yoke you have imposed on yourself, you cannot by rashness and violence remove it; but you may, and will, render it more galling and insupportable." He paused, and she replied,—

"If I *had* given him a right to control me—which, however, I do not admit—it would have been in the belief that it was accorded to an honourable and high-principled man, who would have used it only to promote the interest, and to secure the welfare of those who belong to me, as well as to ensure my own happiness. It would have been a bond signed in the hope and expectation of its proving beneficial to all parties. If, after having bestowed this power, and signed this bond, I should discover that the other partner in it had neither the means nor the will to perform the contract; that. so far from adding to

their mutual happiness, it would have rendered both miserable; that, instead of promoting the interest of those who were dear to me, it would have deeply injured them; should I not be justified in breaking through ties imposed on me by treachery and deceit?"

"No," said Herman, "I think you would not. If you had sworn to fulfil the conditions of a contract, and refused to do so, because another set the example, you would, I conceive, be equally guilty."

"How!" she said angrily, forgetting how much she admitted. "Do you hold that I have no right to break fetters that never could have bound me but by the agency of fraud and falsehood? Do you hold that I am bound to injure those who are near and dear to me, because a stranger and a villain has, with unparalleled baseness, duped and deceived me? — that I am bound to destroy the good and the innocent, that crafty vice

may triumph? No, Herman! no! It is my sacred duty to break these chains."

"This is frightful sophistry, my dear mother," he said, greatly pained. "If arguments such as these were admitted, what would become of the ties that bind society? Were this plea allowed, honour and honesty would be words without meaning."

"Sophistry!" she exclaimed, rising from her seat, her face flushed and her eyes sparkling. "No! it is reason, nature, and common sense. So far as common cases are concerned, you may be right; as a general rule your argument may be good. But this is no common case; this is an exception to the rule. For common minds to be governed by given rules, even under extraordinary circumstances, is natural; but a higher order of intellect disdains to be chained down by these conventionalities. Under the pressure of events, the approach of evils for which the customary rules of

society offer no fitting remedy, a superior mind dares to break through these artificial trammels, and strike out a road for itself. The duty of a person placed in this position is simple, clear, and perfectly defined. The law of nature supersedes all other laws. A mother's *first* duty is to protect her children and their rights. Whatever may interfere with this she must boldly push aside, at whatever peril to herself, until success shall crown her efforts. This I know and feel to be a high and sacred duty, and I shall endeavour to fulfil it, at whatever cost to myself."

Herman knew not what arguments to oppose to reasoning such as this, to this logic of the heart. After a short pause he said, with a forced smile, for his heart was heavy, "We will say no more, my own dear mother, about the right and the wrong in this affair; but suffer me to ask you, do you believe you can browbeat and frighten this

gentleman into submission, or force him to surrender the authority with which you have invested him?"

"Herman," she said, "I request you not to interfere in this business in any way. Leave it to me to act as I may think best. Be sure you cannot aid: but you may injure me!"

So saying she left the room, and Herman, with a heavy depression of spirits, again sought his sister.

CHAPTER IX.

GERTRUDE was watching for him, and eagerly questioned him with regard to what had passed, and whether he had succeeded in stopping the expulsion of the Chevalier's servant.

"No, oh no!" he replied; "nothing can be done. We must remain quiet, and let my mother take her own course. She says we may injure, but cannot aid her. What is her purpose I know not; but she thinks she is in the path of duty, and is steadily bent on pursuing it. I confess I can no longer look forward with the cheering hope I have hitherto had; for at the same time that she evidently entertains a very bad opinion of him, she has unequivocally admitted—

although not directly acknowledged—that she has made him her master, and fears him as such. All I can now hope is, that you may all be mistaken in the character of this man."

Gertrude shook her head in silence, and they parted.

During the next few days scarcely any intercourse took place between the lady and her children. She seemed studiously to avoid any private conversation with them. Blanche only, of the young people, kept her place at her side, in which she appeared to have been reinstated since the illness of the Gräfin.

De Sablons' servant had announced that his master would arrive on the sixth day: three had already passed. A morne and melancholy silence spread through the house: a heavy depression seemed to weigh on all,—an anticipation, a fear, of some unknown and ill-defined evil. The

Gräfin herself, usually so gay, bore a grave and preoccupied face; Gertrude, Herman, and Blanche, all looked pensive and unhappy, and the expression of their faces was faithfully reflected by the old and the attached members of the household. Even the joyous and light-hearted Fritz appeared to sink under the sombre spell.

On the fourth day a messenger came from the Baron von Mühlhausen, announcing a visit from himself and family, provided it suited the Countess to receive them. They were at breakfast when the message was delivered, and excited some surprise, as the houses of Mühlhausen and Felsenberg had not lately been on the most cordial terms. The Gräfin appeared to hesitate, as if undecided whether to accept or refuse the visit, when Herman and Gertrude both exclaimed, "Oh, do not let them come! send a civil excuse."

"And why should they not come?" she said.

"Dear mother," said Gertrude, "how can we entertain friends when we are so—so little inclined to see strangers? especially these Mühlhausens who ——" she stopped, recollecting she was touching an interdicted subject. But the abrupt pause appeared to have excited a fresh train of ideas in the mind of her mother, for she repeated in a low voice, as if speaking to herself rather than to her daughter—

"These Mühlhausens—yes, it was through them that this ——" she also paused and seemed to reflect. "You would say, Gertrude, that we are moping and melancholy. The best reason in the world for inviting visiters. We will invite all our neighbours and entertain them hospitably."

A servant was summoned, the Baron's messenger dismissed with a thankful acceptance of the proffered visit, and other messengers despatched to the neighbouring families, requesting their company on the

second day from the present. As many of them lived at a considerable distance, it was announced that beds would be provided.

Gertrude and Herman, while they listened in silence to these arrangements, could only exchange a glance of wonder, hardly able to decide whether they were glad or sorry. Certainly they were dull and melancholy enough, and there is something congenial to the taste of youth in the bustle and gaiety attending the meeting of strangers. But yet, under the present circumstances—with spirits depressed, and heavy hearts—to be called on to appear gay themselves, and to promote gaiety in their guests, was a difficult if not an irksome task. But it must be done. The fiat had gone forth. When Lady Felsenberg had given orders for the necessary preparations, she said,—"We have not given an entertainment since Herman returned. We shall have a host. We must exhibit ourselves in our gayest

colours, and show them how merry we can be."

A strange commentary on this gay speech was the deep involuntary sigh with which she sank back on her seat, and fell into a profound reverie.

All needful preparations having been made for their reception, on the second day arrived a numerous and noble company, rejoicing in the opportunity, which seldom presented itself, of exhibiting their splendour and their taste—of enjoying the dear delight of seeing and of being seen. We shall not stop to tell what these preparations were, nor recount how gorgeous were the liveries of the serving-men who waited on the guests. Not being bound to spin out this our true tale to any given length, we shall not even tell whether the right noble gentlemen there assembled carved the meat on the trenchers of the lovely ladies with their daggers, and the said fair dames

conveyed the viands, so carved, to their mouths with nature's own forks—their pretty digits. None of these things shall we explain, but get on with our story by saying, that the numerous and noble guests were received by the hostess arrayed in her robes of state, and decked with her most costly jewels. All were received, and among them "these Mühlhausens," with a welcome as glad and as sincere as the "dear five hundred friends" of great ladies generally meet with.

A splendid and plentiful repast was served in the great hall, to which the guests did ample justice, and then retired to the saloons, where numberless waxen torches threw their bright light on the grim figures of the arras, and on the many-coloured hempen mats, and the glossy wolf and bear skins which had displaced the green reeds of summer on the floors, and aided the blazing logs in the chimneys in diffusing an agreeable warmth around.

Every thing had gone right, every body was in his proper place,—a great marvel: content and gaiety reigned, or seemed to reign in the assembly. Many hours had elapsed since dinner, and already some of the elder guests were luxuriating by anticipation in the dainties which were to cover the supper-table, when a slight bustle took place in the antechamber. Herman went to ascertain the cause; and, immediately advancing to his mother, he said in a low voice, "The Chevalier de Sablons, madam, demands admittance! What is your pleasure?"

"Let him enter," she said, with a face paler than usual, but no other sign of emotion was visible to the keenly-scrutinizing glances which were directed towards her. Only the ear of her son, sharpened by affection, detected the tremulous tone of voice with which the words were uttered, as she arose from her seat, and stood

haughty and erect, but apparently calm and quiet, to receive him.

The Chevalier de Sablons was announced with his friends, Les Sieurs Durochet, Préville, Des Marais, and Von Bonstetten. The company, to some of whom De Sablons was personally known, and to all of them by name, roused by a feeling of curiosity, in consequence of the various reports in circulation relative to an alliance between him and their hostess, now fixed their eyes upon her, as if they hoped to discover her real sentiments towards him. The face of Madame de Mühlhausen wore something like a malicious smile. Many old friends, who wished her well, were grave and anxious. Gertrude, Herman, and Blanche, seemed instinctively to rally round her, as if to protect her from some danger.

The Chevalier de Sablons was dressed in a suit of dark-coloured velvet, slashed and puffed with white satin, which set off

his fine person and handsome face to the greatest advantage; and as he advanced up the room, followed by the gentlemen in his train, his plumed hat in his hand, his short mantle swinging gracefully from his shoulders, he appeared the very personification of manly beauty.

A murmur of admiration buzzed through the room: but no one welcomed him, not a foot was moved to meet him. Herman, who had watched for his appearance with eager curiosity, no sooner saw him than he said to himself, "Gertrude is right; he is indeed a dangerous man! eminently handsome, and one few women could resist."

As he traversed the apartment, he bowed to the guests, and again and more lowly to her when he reached the Countess, and would have taken her hand: but she withheld it, and stood still, haughtily erect. A passing shade clouded his face, and a frown for a moment displaced the smile with

which he had advanced. But again it was all sunshine, in appearance at least, and he said, "After the great condescension you have shown me, madam — the high honour you have done me — I trust you will add to the gratitude I owe you, by presenting me to your friends."

"By what name, and in what character would you wish to be presented, sir?" she said, gravely.

He looked at her for a moment in silence, with a droll, whimsical, ironical expression, and then said, laughing, "Any name *you* may be pleased to bestow upon me I am bound to cherish."

She made no reply to this speech, but, turning to the company, she said, "My friends and guests, this gentleman requests me——"

"Mother, dear mother! For God's sake reflect on what you are about to do!" cried Herman, in a low but eager voice, terribly apprehensive of the result.

"Herman," she replied, in the same low tone, but with a contracted brow, "do not, by ill-timed and useless remonstrance, render still more difficult the terrible task I have to perform.——This gentleman wishes to be presented to you, my guests. He desires me to name him. To many of you he is already known as the Chevalier de Sablons, a native of France. By his earlier and more intimate associates, I have reason to believe he would be recognised only by the name of Barto Villanova, an Italian. His profession or occupation——" she paused, and turning to the Chevalier said, "Do you wish me to go on, sir?"

"As you please, madam!" he replied haughtily, struggling against the surprise and dismay which for a moment blanched his cheek, and shook his frame. "It matters little what names you may think proper to allot me, since they are all super-

seded by that of Graf von Felsenberg, which, as your husband, I claim!"

"I will not affect surprise," she said, calmly, "for I had been informed that you had conceived the project you have now announced; and I presume you have not omitted to furnish yourself with some sort of documents to aid you in making out a plausible case. It was in order to have them publicly examined that I requested the presence of my noble guests, as soon as I knew you intended to honour me with a visit."

As she uttered this with an air of quiet self-possession, De Sablons looked at her with amazement.

"Is it your intention, then, to deny your marriage, madam? Answer me, Madame de Felsenberg!"

"I think, after what I have said, that question is unnecessary, sir," she replied.

"You have taken a strange course, and a

bold one, it must be admitted," he said. "Will you give me leave to summon Father Saldorf?"

A solemn pause ensued. No one spoke. At length the Baron de Mühlhausen said, "Father Saldorf is dead."

"Dead!" repeated De Sablons; "and who has succeeded to his office? Who has charge of the registers?"

The register was produced, but no entry appeared to corroborate his assertion. In vain he and his friends turned over the leaves; in vain page after page was examined and re-examined. At length, fully convinced it contained not what he sought, he turned with a fierce scowl, and an eye flashing with fury, and said, "I demand that your servants, Johann Barneck and Esther Griffindale, be summoned. Yet what would that avail," he added: "they would speak but as they were directed. But here," suddenly advancing and seizing the hand of Blanche, "is a witness who

will tell the truth. I appeal to you, Mademoiselle! you know I am the husband of Madame de Felsenberg."

Poor Blanche was at that moment the most unhappy person of the assembly. She could not but understand the bold plan her aunt had formed to defeat the machinations of a villain, although astonished at her temerity. She looked at her. She saw that dear aunt, who had been through life a mother to her, quailing with fear at the declaration about to pass her lips. Could it be the duty of a niece so affectionately cherished to aid this unprincipled man to triumph over her and hers? The task was bitterly repugnant to her upright and honourable mind; but she *must* follow the Countess in the bold course she had adopted. If her actions were wrong, her motives were right. May the recording angel arrange the account, and blot out all that would condemn her!

Struggling against the strong dislike which all rational creatures feel to utter what they know to be untrue, she came forward and replied to his repeated question, "You know I am the husband of Madame de Felsenberg?"—"No."

"How!" he said. "Will you deny that you told me your aunt had acknowledged her marriage to you?"

Blanche had passed the Rubicon. It cost comparatively little to persevere in the course she had been compelled to take; and she replied, with a courage and a spirit for which nobody had given her credit, —

"I protest that since I have known you, sir, your whole conduct has been such as to establish in my mind the belief that you were my own devoted slave; that, so far from having an idea of pledging your vows to another, you have sworn a thousand times that life would be a burden to you, unless cheered by the hope of some day calling *me*

your wife. And when you had the temerity to secrete yourself in my chamber at midnight, you pleaded the frenzy of despair, occasioned by the fear of losing me, as an excuse. How, then, knowing all this to be true, dare you appeal to me as witness that you are the husband of another?"

De Sablons stood mute with astonishment. The gentle, the timid, quiet Blanche, whose feminine sweetness and meekness had so fascinated him, and really won all the affection his cold and selfish heart could feel, was suddenly transformed into an animated, energetic, self-relying woman, boldly defending the cause of her aunt, and throwing odium on him by revealing circumstances which he had believed she would never dare to tell.

Herman, who had been agitated and miserable from the first entrance of De Sablons, during the latter part of the scene which brought Blanche forward in a charac-

ter so prominent, absolutely shivered with emotion. Never had he so much admired her; never had he thought her so beautiful. Her soft blue eyes sparkling with animation as she stood with her slender and youthful form drawn up to its utmost height, and bearing an air of proud dignity, addressing De Sablons, who seemed to crouch beneath her indignation.

"Alas!" he said to himself, "she is lost to me! This villain won them both! It is too true that they were rivals!"

De Sablons, thus foiled and baffled, stood now with a lowering countenance, apparently undecided what to do. At length he said, "Madame la Baronne de Mühlhausen was aware of the marriage."

The Baroness coloured, but remained for some time silent. It was true that she knew of the marriage. She had proposed the visit to Felsenberg on this day, because she was aware of De Sablons' intention of

being there for the purpose of claiming his bride; and she had hoped to gratify her curiosity in witnessing the *dénouement* of an affair which had hitherto been carried on so secretly.

But now the business wore a different aspect. From what had transpired, there appeared a probability that her protegé and favourite, the accomplished Chevalier, would turn out an intriguing adventurer. The proud and noble lady shrank in dismay at the idea of having been the dupe of a *roturier, un homme du peuple;* and she said, with some hesitation, in reply to his appeal, "I heard of your marriage from yourself only, sir. You best know whether the information was correct."

"I demand that your servants be summoned, Madame de Felsenberg," he said abruptly, turning to the Countess: "those who were present at our marriage."

"Will you be pleased to name those

members of my household you wish to interrogate, sir?" she said calmly.

"I have already named them," he replied. "Johann Barneck and Esther Griffindale."

Lady Felsenberg hesitated a moment, but gave the order. The two servants were summoned, and soon made their appearance at the door of the saloon. The gray-headed Barneck advanced, and the Countess trembled. She knew the honourable integrity of his character; and notwithstanding his entire and faithful devotion to her, she had never dared to tamper with him. It was evident he knew the purpose for which he had been summoned; for there was fear, anxiety, and indecision on his face. She saw this, and Esther Griffindale saw it too.

With the ready tact and address of one equally devoted, and much less scrupulous, she displaced her companion, and, planting herself before him, presented herself with a low curtsey and most submissive air to the

sullen Chevalier, who, somewhat mollified by the humility of her manner, was led to hope she might be induced to speak the truth, and he said gently, "Esther, you remember the second of June?"

"The second of June, noble sir?" she repeated, reflecting as if endeavouring to recall some event to her memory: "the second of June—I think—yes—I recollect it perfectly. It was the day the young ladies went to Schwetzingen; and my lady, who was to have gone with them, was ill, and did not leave her bed all day."

"Liar! you may go!" said De Sablons in a voice of thunder, pushing her aside, and addressing Barneck. "And you, old man; are you too prepared to disgrace your gray hairs by perjury—to utter a deliberate lie on the border of the grave?"

There was a stern frown on his brow, and a solemn tone in his voice, that gave to this bad man an air of superiority—of

dignity even, (such is the force of truth!) that awed the servant he questioned, and made the mistress quail.

After a pause of silence, during which Barneck stood apparently stupid and bewildered, the question was repeated, "Do *you* remember the second of June, when you were a witness to your lady's marriage?"

Esther, evidently trembling for the result, again sprang to the rescue. With a cry of distress she exclaimed, "Oh, I am ill! I am faint, my head is giddy!"

Clinging to Barneck for support, she whispered a few emphatic words in his ear. A third time the question was repeated ere he replied; then, raising his right arm slowly, he waved his cap in the air, and said, "My lady is a good lady, and a noble lady. Five times since dinner we drank her health, and five times after supper we will drink it again. Long life to my noble lady!"

"The fool is drunk!" said De Sablons, who now saw himself utterly baffled in the design of substantiating the fact of his marriage, and gave it up for the present as hopeless. Turning proudly to the assembled company, he said, "I am the victim of a base conspiracy! I have no means now to *prove* that I am the husband of Madame de Felsenberg: but I solemnly declare that I was married to her in the adjoining chapel, by Father Saldorf, on the second of June, in the presence of her two servants. I appeal to the just God, and every holy saint, to witness that this is the truth!"

"And do you dare to appeal to God and his saints?" said the Gräfin, now somewhat excited, "you who——"

"Mother, dear mother! oh forbear!" said Herman again, in an anxious whisper.

"What I dare to do, madam," cried De Sablons, with a bitter emphasis on his words,

"*you* have yet to learn, and may some day know to your cost!"

He now again bowed to the company and quitted the room, followed by Durochet and his other friends.

The Countess, as he disappeared, sank pale and exhausted into a seat. Blanche and her children closed round her.

"Some wine," she said in a whisper, — "give me some wine."

The wine was brought, and eagerly swallowed. She desired the supper should be immediately served, and was promptly obeyed. The guests seated themselves. She made a desperate effort to rally her failing strength and spirits, and succeeded. Mirth and hilarity reigned at the hospitable board. Whatever opinions might have been formed of the strange scene they had so lately witnessed, there seemed now a universal determination to enjoy the present,

without reference to the past, or anticipation of the future.

The lady herself set them the example. She was gay, brilliant, witty. But nature could not be thus outraged long with impunity. Her gay spirits and her merry laugh were but the mask that covered a reproving conscience, a sinking heart, and a spirit fearfully foreboding a disastrous future. Spite of the sophistry with which she had striven to stultify her understanding and indulge her hatred, she knew and felt that in quitting the path of truth and right she had entered on a stormy and perilous career. She had outraged and defied the man she had sworn to love, honour, and obey, and had thereby excited the anger, and roused the spirit of revenge, in the bosom of one she knew to be reckless and unprincipled.

While the lofty hall echoed with a peal of laughter, raised by a witty jest she had uttered, the glass in which she had pledged

the health of her guests fell from her hand, and she sank back on her seat, pale and motionless.

She was carried to her chamber. The guests soon after retired, and the next day quitted Felsenberg, without again seeing their hostess.

CHAPTER X.

UNDER circumstances such as these, the departure of their guests was a great relief to the young members of the family; who no sooner found themselves freed from the now irksome task of entertaining them, than they met to consult on the measures to be taken, in a position so singular and so embarrassing. After a short debate, it was decided, that Herman should go to his mother and once again try to bring her to reason.

On entering her room, he saw that although she appeared to be very languid and looked very pale, the expression of her face was calm and quiet, and she tried to smile as she held out her hand to him. But the

smile was forced and unnatural, and even the attempt to appear cheerful ceased, as she looked at the grave and melancholy countenance of her son. As he seated himself beside her, she said,—"Herman, you ought to rejoice that this miserable, but necessary business is over. I confess it was a terrible task; but it is sometimes necessary to do wrong in order to restore right."

"Mother," he replied gravely, "we will not discuss the right or the reason in this affair, but I entreat you to reflect on the propriety — the necessity of conciliating the Chevalier de Sablons. Suffer me, I beseech you — authorize me to treat with him: let us endeavour to purchase his silence and forbearance. If you cannot — will not acknowledge him as your husband, although he is so, let us bribe him not to urge his claims as such."

"It cannot be!" she replied. "No, there

is no middle course to take with a man like this. He is a villain! You cannot bind a man without principle. He would take the bribe, promise, and laugh at you for expecting him to keep it. No. There is no other course than open and steady defiance."

"And you are sure you are not deceived in the ill opinion you have formed of him?"

"No, no. Alas, no! The proofs of his infamy are too many, too clear, too convincing to admit of doubt. I feel assured that my life even would be in peril, were I in his power. He is infinitely artful: a most accomplished intriguer. I fully acquit Madame de Mühlhausen, who introduced him. He would dupe the keenest and most acute observers, if he chose to do so. I am not free to relate even to you, Herman, all I have heard of his history, nor the means by which I obtained my information; nothing but the fact that he is a wretch, without honour, principle, or feeling!"

Herman said no more, but, rising from his seat, slowly and with a heavy sigh left the room.

A few days only had elapsed, during which a gloomy tranquillity seemed to reign in the house, and a sort of listless gravity to have taken place of the light step and cheerful air which had once characterized its youthful inmates, when a very fine day once again sent forth the family in different directions.

Herman went off to the woods to hunt, the Gräfin walked to Ziegelhausen, a hamlet in the valley about half a league from the castle, while Gertrude and Blanche were busy with the plants which required shelter from the coming winter.

The days were now short, and the sun was already sinking, when Herman, somewhat weary, on his way home was abruptly accosted by one of the foresters, who, breathless with haste, told him he had seen, in a

very secluded part of the forest, several armed men, who appeared anxious to conceal themselves; that he had watched them unseen, and had ascertained that several horses also were ready saddled and tethered to the trees beneath which they stood. "I am sure," said the man, "they are after no good, so close to the Schlangenweg, and my lady often goes to Ziegelhausen."

"Ha!" said Herman, considerably alarmed, "she is gone there to-day. Sound your horn, Staubfuss, and follow me!"

So saying, he ran off towards the Schlangenweg, bitterly regretting that he had quitted the hunters to return on foot and alone.

He ran on for about half a mile, and had nearly as much more to reach the place the forester mentioned, when a shrill scream rose from the valley, and a cry for help met his ear. In a moment afterwards, the sound of galloping horses mingled with the cries.

He was still on the mountain road, the

safe regular descent yet distant. It was impossible to reach it in time to intercept them on their way. There was but one means: it was to descend by the Bärengang, a difficult and dangerous cleft in the rocks, steep and precipitous; but, urged by fear and affection for his mother, he threw himself down, and happily arrived uninjured at the bottom. The man who had warned him of the danger had followed his rapid course till they came to the Bärengang; but here his courage failed, so that Herman was now alone. The narrow and winding road on which he now was, made many turns, so that he had time, ere the horsemen came up, to sound a long and shrill blast on the hunting horn suspended from his neck. Again and again it echoed through the forest, was repeated by the caverned echoes, and answered by distant shouts.

He had not leisure sufficient to reflect on the unequal contest in which he was about

to engage; for the hollow thundering sound of the horses' hoofs, announced the approach of several horsemen. He had no time to *think*. He could only *feel* that his mother was in danger, and crying for help. That she was in the power of a man with whom she had declared her life even would be perilled, (for he could not doubt that the cries came from her;) and he obeyed the impulse of native courage and warm affection, in seeking to save her.

With a pale face, notwithstanding the strong muscular exertions he had so lately made in descending the Bärengang — a mouth firmly closed, and a brow sternly contracted—he stood half concealed by the surrounding trees, still and determined; and as the first horseman came up considerably in advance of two others who followed, he sprang forth.

With desperate courage, and a strong arm, he seized the bridle rein and bore the startled

horse back on its haunches, parried the blow of De Sablons' sword—for it was indeed he —with his only weapon, the long hunting knife he had drawn from his belt, and buried it to the handle in the horse's side. The poor animal made one mighty bound forward, striking down Herman, and fell dead on the ground beside him. Not much hurt, and still animated by the daring energy which had urged him to the struggle, he was instantly on his legs again. Wildly shouting for help, he raised his mother from the body of the dead horse, near which lay De Sablons, one of his legs entangled in the stirrup-leather which had twisted round it. With a fierce oath he severed it with his sword, and arose.

The two other horsemen were by this time up, and Durochet, the foremost, shouting to the other, who had thrown himself from his horse, seized the Countess, whom Herman was compelled to abandon

by the fierce attack of De Sablons. "Fling her up! Fling her up!" shouted Durochet. The unhappy lady was rudely thrown into his arms, and he prepared to fly, while Herman and De Sablons were engaged in a deadly and most unequal conflict, the result of which was not long doubtful. The son lay bleeding on the earth, and the mother's fate appeared to be decided, when a wild and ringing cry arose, heard simultaneously from many points: loud shouts announced help at hand. Hunters, foresters, and wood-rangers, armed with axes, spears, and hunting knives, bounding forward from every side, surrounded the place, closing in with bold and resolute faces. The game was up! The lady was rescued by her people. De Sablons and his companions fled.

The wounds Herman had received were not found to be dangerous ones, and he soon recovered; but the tranquillity of the family,

so fearfully broken up, was not speedily restored. They lived now in the constant fear of some fresh attempt on the part of De Sablons, to seize the person of his imprudent and unhappy wife, who found herself compelled to submit to a sort of imprisonment which was irksome to her. She dared no longer visit and chat with her humble dependants in their cottages, as she had been in the habit of doing, without previously giving notice, that a strong escort might be ready to attend her; and a vigilant watch was kept up round the castle.

Many times were the guardians of her liberty put on the *qui vive*, and their activity roused by reports of ambuscades: and every stranger who appeared in the neighbourhood was subjected to a rigid examination.

At length they were relieved from this wearying and ceaseless worry, by the intelligence that De Sablons and his

companions had quitted the country. Cautiously they listened to tidings so agreeable, and not till they had ascertained, as they believed, its truth, did their vigilance relax. The servants, the luggage, the Chevalier and his friends, were all traced to a place far distant, and the family of Felsenberg once more rejoiced in a fancied security. Alas! they little knew the wily foe they had to contend with.

The winter had now set in. A sharp, clear, cold atmosphere stripped the last leaves from the trees, and covered the ponds and lakes with ice. Skating had superseded hunting. It was a favourite amusement with Herman, and he rejoiced at sight of the frozen surface of the waters.

One fine morning he had risen with the sun and repaired to a somewhat distant lake; scarcely had he reached it, when he was followed by a messenger with evil tidings. The Gräfin had disappeared.

Esther, on going to her room early, as had been her custom, found it vacant, the bed tumbled, the bed-clothes on the floor, and every thing in confusion. The window of an adjoining cabinet which looked on the moat was found open, the iron bars which defended it having been removed. Doubtless through this opening she had been carried off.

Herman and a number of the men-servants were soon mounted, and scouring the country in every direction, but in vain. In vain they questioned every one at all likely to give information by which she might be traced. The only intelligence they could obtain was from a *Kohl-brenner* (charcoal burner) whose hut stood on the outskirts of the forest. He said that a little after midnight, he had been airing the coal mounds, when he was accosted by a stranger, who inquired if there was not a short road to Schneidersheim: he said there was, and going with him to show him the

way, he saw him join two other persons, one of whom was enveloped in a large cloak, and appeared to be forced forward unwillingly, and compelled to advance. At Schneidersheim they could obtain no tidings, and after a long and useless tour they returned home, without even a hope to cheer them. The next day—the second—third—all passed in the same restless, anxious, persevering search.

Poor Herman, harassed and worn with such unremitting toil, was nevertheless never easy during the short intervals which were absolutely necessary for food and repose. The moment he sat down, the idea of his unhappy mother in the power and at the mercy of her unprincipled husband, presented itself, and he started off in a new search.

More than a week had passed in this perplexity, and Herman had again returned from a fruitless expedition, and heard that

no news had arrived. Worn down with fatigue, spiritless and exhausted, he threw himself on a seat and burst into tears.

The strong and courageous young man was wholly subdued. He sat and wept like a woman.

Women weep easily. It is often a great relief to them. But tears are not lightly wrung from a man. It is terrible to see tears flowing down a man's face.

Gertrude and Blanche, who were present, felt it so; they crept to his side, anxious to console him. Gertrude threw her arms round his neck, and mingled her tears with his; and Blanche, cold and shy as she had been for some time past, stood leaning over him with a look of grief and affection.

After a time they became more calm, and sat down to talk over the efforts which had been already made, and to form fresh plans for the future.

"This is the ninth day since she was

carried off," said Blanche. A mournful silence succeeded this observation.

The sun had set, and the evening was fast closing in, as they remained in melancholy rumination, when some one entered the room and closed the door. It was too dark to see who it was, but a voice uttered a few faint sounds that electrified the whole party. It was the voice of Lady Felsenberg. Herman sprang from his seat with renewed vigour, but trembling with joy. He placed her on a seat and stood before her; while the two girls knelt joyfully beside her, eagerly questioning the poor, weary, and exhausted lady, who was sinking with hunger and fatigue.

"Give me food," she said; "I have had none since yesterday." Wine and food restored her strength, and she told her short tale to her anxious and rejoicing audience. But when lights were brought in, they saw with grief that she was very

pale and much emaciated. Her face had a worn and withered look. Short as her absence had been, it seemed to have done the work of years.

"On the Friday night," she said, "Esther had scarcely quitted the room, and I had lain down in my bed and was sinking to sleep, when I was roused by a slight noise of something moving near me. I sat up and listened, but all was still. I believed I had been mistaken, and being weary I was soon in a profound slumber. From this I was again aroused by a sense of suffocation. Some one had placed a bandage over my mouth, and was in the act of fastening it. It was De Sablons. He commanded me to get up and dress myself. I resisted, and although I could not speak, I hoped to be able to make noise enough to awaken Esther."

The Countess paused. Her countenance painfully expressed the mingled feelings of

disgust and indignation with which she recalled the outrage and indignities to which she had been subjected. At length she continued her narrative. With a heavy sigh she said, "It is a hateful subject! and sometimes I wish, Herman, I had taken your advice and tried a compromise, instead of defying him." Again she stopped, but in a moment after added, vehemently, "No! no! He is a wretch! a wretch! nothing could bind him." She then went on more calmly.

"When I resisted, he uttered a few words in a low voice, which seemed to curdle my blood. I submitted. He wrapped me in a thick cloak, and lowered me from the window of an adjoining chamber from which he had previously found means to remove the bars. He let me down into the arms of Durochet, that wretched tool of a more daring villain! We crossed the frozen moat and passed the postern, of which he

had a key; and for some hours of that night I was sometimes carried and sometimes dragged, or driven forward, till at length we entered a building, and ascended a flight of steps.

"When the stifling garments were removed which enveloped my head, I found I was in a lofty square chamber, with green and mouldering walls, a rotten and worm-eaten floor. It was lighted by windows far too high to allow a possibility of reaching them. I was soon informed for what purpose I had been conveyed there. It was announced to me that this ruined building was to be my prison, and my grave, unless I released myself by acknowledging De Sablons as my husband. They fed me on bread and water. That I heeded not. I could have laughed at that. But the villains found means to inflict mental tortures on me that were hard to bear. They knew on what point I was most vulnerable. The

cowards struck at me through my children. Their threats, their fatal predictions, were directed towards Gertrude, Blanche, and, above all, to Herman. They menaced me too with horrible indignities: but I will not dwell on these sad hours. A merciful Providence defeated their plans, and sent me a release when I least expected it. I know not even now whether my escape was the result of accident or design; but, on the eighth day of my captivity, the sun had set, and I had no light, when my attention was attracted by a slight noise at the door of the room. Absorbed in mournful thoughts, at first I did not heed it: but it became louder, and was repeated at intervals, and I rose from my seat and listened. The creaking sound ceased, and I thought it must have been the wind, which you know was high last night, that had shaken the door: but as I approached it, a puff of cold air blew in my face, that astonished

me, for I felt assured it must be open. It was so.

"I looked out and listened, but neither saw nor heard any one. It was quite dark, and the cold wind was sweeping round the old building. I descended the stairs and crossed a court-yard. No one was visible. I passed through an opening in the wall, and found I was in the open country. Dark as it was, I was afraid to proceed, but still more afraid of being dragged back to the gloomy chamber: I therefore crept cautiously on. I heard a dog bark at some distance, and directed my course towards the sound. At length I came to a place that appeared to be a rick-yard, with a quantity of loose straw lying at the foot of a stack. Here I passed the night wrapped up in the cloak in which I had been carried off. Spite of this covering, I suffered much from the cold, and still more from anxiety

lest I should be discovered by my enemies.

"As soon as the day dawned, I crept cautiously out and looked round. To my great joy I found I was not more than two leagues from Staubeck, and yet I have occupied the whole day in getting home. I was obliged to make a long round, not daring to come by the direct road, lest I should fall in with the wretches, who were doubtless in search of me. I am strongly inclined to believe I owe my liberty to the young man who supplied my food in the absence of my other jailers; for more than once I caught his eye fixed on me, with, I thought, a look of pity, which half induced me to try and gain him over to my interest."

CHAPTER XI.

Once again peace and quiet reigned at Felsenberg; but its mistress was greatly changed. Her health appeared to have suffered, and her gaiety was wholly gone. Her time was now almost entirely passed in her own apartment, either alone or with Blanche; from which Gertrude and Herman seemed strangely excluded. They thought it singular, but submitted without murmur or reproach to what was evidently the will of their mother, whom they now seldom saw. No longer caring about her appearance, and negligent of her dress, when she did join the family circle she was always enveloped in a loose wrapping gown, which entirely concealed the fine form of which she had

once been proud. The reason of this seeming caprice Blanche only knew.

Not long after her escape from prison and her return home, Blanche found her one day more than commonly depressed in spirits, and vainly sought to cheer her. "Oh Blanche," she said, bursting into tears, "you know but half my misery — my humiliation. In a few months—if I live ——" she stopped. A crimson blush dyed her cheeks, mounted to her forehead even, and then faded to a deathlike hue, as evidently with a painful struggle she continued, "In a short time, if I live, I shall give birth to the child of —— of ——" Her voice sank, and she left the phrase unfinished.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Blanche, letting her work, and the hands that held it, fall into her lap. "And no one knows this?"

"No one except Esther, who was present at this fatal marriage."

"Oh! dear Lady Felsenberg!" said she earnestly, "knowing this, had you still the —the courage—shall I not rather say, the rashness, to deny the marriage, and defy this man?"

"No," she replied, in a low and melancholy tone, "I did not then know it, or—I should not perhaps have dared to act as I did. Shocked and irritated when I discovered how I had been duped and betrayed—to what a wretch I had bound myself,—when I reflected on the injury I had done my family in giving him power over them; above all, the ruin I had brought on the fortunes of my poor Herman, I became almost frantic with anxiety to find some means to counteract the fatal influence I had thus created. I argued myself into a belief that I was not morally bound by an engagement into which I had been drawn by deceit and falsehood; but so long as Father Saldorf lived, I

remained undecided as to the course I should take to get rid of the odious bonds with which I had so rashly fettered myself. Had he lived, I should never have dared to deny the marriage. But after the first burst of grief for the loss of my faithful friend was passed, I rejoiced that by his death was removed the only obstacle to a plan I had already half formed.

"I believed the will of God was manifest in this event, and I went boldly on, and with a determined spirit, in the course of conduct I had laid down."

Here she paused, sighed heavily, and then continued: "But I could delude myself no longer by such reasoning when I discovered that I was pregnant. It is the will of God thus to confirm ties that bind me to a villain, doubtless as a punishment for the presumption with which I dared to decide on breaking through the trammels I had myself imposed!"

Heavily and slowly passed the winter months. Spring again returned to cheer the inmates of this melancholy dwelling. It was the beginning of March. The hour of pain and peril for the Gräfin was fast approaching, yet had no midwife been summoned or consulted. Steadily, obstinately she refused any other aid than such as Esther could furnish; or any confidant save those who already knew her situation. To the remonstrances of Blanche she replied: "No, I will have no more partakers in the disgraceful secret. Esther has her orders: she will obey them. My life is no longer so precious, that I should risk discovery in order to guard it. My death would be a benefit to my family."

Often she seemed so wild and flighty, as to terrify poor Blanche, on whom she had thus imposed a heavy responsibility. Sometimes she reflected seriously whether it was not her duty rather to confide to

Herman and Gertrude their mother's situation, than thus to guard her secret at the risk of her life perhaps. But she had promised — solemnly promised; and she hesitated till there was no longer time to reveal it.

Lady Felsenberg gave birth to a little girl, whom, according to previous instructions, Esther immediately removed from her presence. But no farther did she go in obedience to her lady's commands; which had been to deliver the child to Barneck, who was to convey it to a distant village to be nursed; to see that it was properly cared for, but never to mention or allude to it in her presence.

Blanche wept over the unhappy little stranger thus condemned ere its birth to banishment and desertion: but she did not venture to interfere at present, whatever she might have found courage to do at a future period; and Barneck was prepared

to obey a mistress whose will he had rarely disputed. But the favourite waiting-woman had a will of her own: and although Lady Felsenberg had declared that the offspring of her now abhorred husband would be odious to her, and that she would never consent to look at an object which could only excite in her heart the bitterest feelings of hatred and disgust; spite of this absolute renunciation, no sooner was the lady well enough to sit up, than Esther softly entered the room and quietly placed the sleeping baby in her lap, and then with admirable tact as quietly retreated, but not so far but that she could see the Countess fix an earnest gaze on the infant, and, after a short pause, fold her arms round it and fondly press it to her bosom.

Esther, satisfied with the result of her experiment, now ventured again to show herself.

"It *must* go!" said the lady, looking up,

but still holding it fast, and kissing its little face and tiny hands.

"Yes," replied Esther, "*now it may go:* but 'tis a delicate little thing. It could not do without a mother."

The child was removed, not to a distant place, but to a spot close to the castle, where the fond mother could visit and watch over its health and safety.

This was a joyful revolution to old Barneck and to Blanche, who already loved the child and mourned over its fate.

Once more Lady Felsenberg made her appearance in the family circle, with health restored and looking like herself, but more grave and sedate. Her vivacity had disappeared, but she was cheerful, hopeful, and comparatively happy. But the time was now fast approaching when Herman's professional duties would compel him to quit his home once more. The idea of a separation was terrible to them all. The

winter months had been allowed to pass in peace: but they could not hope that this would continue, when the absence of her protector would embolden the wily De Sablons to fresh attempts on the liberty of Lady Felsenberg; and they trembled for her safety.

She herself said nothing, but the pallid hue of her face when Herman's departure was alluded to sufficiently showed her feelings. Many consultations were held, and at length it was decided that the family should quit Felsenberg immediately, and under an assumed name seek an asylum in some distant place, where they might remain till Herman should be once again able to join them.

In pursuance of this plan, every thing was arranged for a removal: but much discussion was yet necessary to decide on the place of retreat to which they should ultimately resort. So many objections pre-

sented themselves both to Germany and France, that it was finally decided that a residence should be sought in England; to the great satisfaction of Esther, whose influence had gone far towards the election.

Esther was a native of England, and fond of her country, although she had left it at an early age to serve in a French convent, where Lady Felsenberg had been educated. English servants were in great demand in the convents, not only on account of their staid gravity of manner, but also from the facility it afforded the pupils in the acquirement of the English language, at that time considered an indispensable accomplishment to every person of fashion in France and Germany. All the family of Felsenberg spoke English. England therefore was the most eligible, as being the most remote, and inaccessible to their enemy.

Openly then, but with bitter regret, they

quitted their native home, the abode of their ancestors, surrounded by its wild romantic scenery, its ancient forests, and the loved haunts of their early days, and repaired to Brussels, establishing themselves, as if intending to reside there; and then, having taken all needful precautions to elude pursuit, secretly and at night departed for Ostend, where they embarked for England, and took up their abode in an old manor-house on the coast of Devonshire. Two servants only, Barneck and Esther, attended them; not even Fritz—the joyous and faithful Fritz, was intrusted with the secret of their new residence and new name.

The situation of the house was lonely and remote, on a high moor or down, scarcely four hundred yards from the verge of the cliffs, which rose almost perpendicularly, forming a sort of irregular crescent round the beach, the rocks in some places covered with woods, feathering to the

water's edge, in others rising naked and abrupt in many coloured masses, finely contrasting with the silver waves rolling on the yellow sands and spreading far away.

On the right were dotted the scattered huts of a little colony of fishermen. At nearly the same distance on the left hand, the spires of a monastic edifice were visible; but the building itself, enveloped in its own luxuriant groves and orchards, and sunk in the fertile valley where it stood, was scarcely seen. Behind and around the house stretched the wild, uncultivated, but not barren moor, since it was covered with a native vegetation of heath and fern, furze, and low scrubby brushwood, in which the wild deer and stunted race of forest horses bred in peace, and shared its shelter with the wandering sheep, and the ever-wheeling plover; and near the cliffs the smuggler and the sea-birds also found safe and secret places of abode.

In this ancient domain, enclosed within high walls, called Fenton Manor-house, the family of Felsenberg, under the assumed name of Saint Amand, took up their residence, having added to the domestics several natives of the neighbourhood; among them a nurse-maid for the baby, which Esther had introduced as the orphan of a deceased sister. As Lady Felsenberg, or Madame Saint Amand, as she was now called, seemed quietly to acquiesce in this arrangement, no other person could object to it, and the baby became one of the family.

No sooner were they installed in their new dwelling, than Herman took a mournful leave of them, uncertain as he was when he should again behold them, and departed to join the imperial army. Those he quitted settled down to the quiet monotony of a country life, enlivened occasionally by a sail on the blue sea, a visit to a village fair, or by taking part in a religious procession

on some high saint's day, or solemn festival of the church.

Almost the only visits received by the little peaceful household were made by the monks of the neighbouring monastery, called Fenmoor Abbey. Of these visiters, the most frequent were the good Fathers Rupert and Jerome. The first, a pious, kind, and benevolent man, took on himself more especially the office of spiritual guide and director in the family: while the bustling and active Father Jerome, in his devotion to his spiritual duties, by no means abandoned his temporal ones. The opinions he had ever supported were, that after bestowing due attention on the affairs of the world to come, it was also incumbent on a pious man to secure as many of the good things of the present one as he conveniently might: "inasmuch as," he said, "God had given the produce of the earth for man's use, with the fatness and the fulness thereof, so that

man's duty was to consume the same with thanksgiving and a joyful spirit."

We must do Father Jerome the justice to declare,

> "His doctrines and his life were one:
> He practised what he preached."

For the reverend gentleman condescended to bring his learning and superior intelligence to aid the ordinary purveyors of the convent. He knew better than any one how to procure the fattest venison, and the freshest fish. As the pious and unworldly Rupert looked after the souls of the family, Father Jerome may be said to have taken charge of their bodies. With the same care that he provided the holy brotherhood with fish, flesh, and fowl, the best of every thing, he also furnished the little peaceful household of Madame Saint Amand, — "an excellent lady," (to use his own words,) "who cheerfully subscribed to the necessities of the church, and held in reverence its ministers."

In fact, in all temporal concerns Father Jerome was the grand referee, as the devout Father Rupert in spiritual ones; the one as regularly reporting extraordinary interpositions of Providence, and fresh miracles for their edification, as the other furnished the tattle and gossip of the country for their amusement.

We must not omit, among the enlivening events which roused them occasionally from the dreamy course of their hum-drum life, the arrival of letters from Herman, which, coming "few and far between," excited a proportionately joyous sensation.

A year had elapsed in this even and unmarked stream; the mild winter had passed, and the sunbeams of May danced once again upon the sparkling seas, and decked the earth with flowers; when one of these letters came, welcome always, but this one met ten thousand welcomes, and created a jubilee throughout the house.

It announced at once a visit from himself, and the death of De Sablons. This had been the result of a wound received in a gaming-house at Avignon, where a quarrel had arisen in consequence of a suspicion of foul play. This precious epistle was dated from London, and concluded thus:—

"This time, my dear mother, there is no mistake. Knowing the *rusy* character of the man, I was slow in giving credit to the report, which reached me immediately, for I was myself in that city at the time it took place. I went instantly to the suburb where he was said to have been killed, in order to ascertain the truth or falsehood of the tale. I did not quit it till I had followed the *convoi* which bore his body to the tomb. I could not, did not, grieve for his death; for he was your enemy. I could not, did not, rejoice; for it was awfully sudden, to a man so wholly unfit, so unprepared to die. May Heaven have

mercy on him! We will speak of him, — we will think of him, if possible, no more. I trust it will not be long before I shall again be with you: but I am detained by the indisposition of the good Queen Katharine, for whom I am charged with letters from her nephew, my imperial master."

After the receipt of this letter, there was an end to all occupation at Fenton Manor-house that in any way interfered with the constant watch that was kept from the windows, or the often-repeated walk towards the road by which Herman was expected to arrive; who meantime was waiting in London with equal impatience for the completion of the business which would leave him free to join them.

CHAPTER XII.

At length the expected summons came from the palace. He found the good, but unhappy queen surrounded by her ladies in one of the long gallery-shaped, many-windowed rooms of the Westminster Palace, which opened on the river. She looked pale and pensive, but received the packet Herman presented with a pleased and gracious smile; and as she read the contents, she looked up and laid her hand affectionately on the head of the Princess Mary, who stood beside her, a child then about eleven years of age, pale and thin, and already characterized by a staid gravity, unnatural at such an age. "Mary," she

said, "the Emperor, thy cousin, sends thee greeting and affectionate remembrance."

As she spoke, the door opened, and the gentleman usher announced that his Eminence the Cardinal Minister requested an audience. The queen's face suddenly changed, and she said, somewhat haughtily, "We are engaged: let him wait." She then added in a low tone, as if speaking to herself, "*Santa Virgin!* but our enemies tread hard on the heels of our friends. He must be admitted. Mary, thou mayest retire now, my child."

A lady advanced from the group, who stood at a distant part of the room, and followed the princess out. Cardinal Wolsey was now admitted. He advanced to the foot of the raised seat on which the queen was placed, and bowed profoundly as Herman had done: but no pleased and cheerful smile greeted *him;* no hand was graciously extended towards him. She sat upright,

and with a stately air, a brow slightly contracted, and her mouth pursed up as if prepared for the contest she probably anticipated.

"If it might please your Highness to let me speak with you alone," said the Cardinal, looking at Herman, who, not wholly unused to the etiquette of courts, moved not in obedience to the desire for his absence expressed by the proud and powerful man who then so decidedly influenced the politics of Europe, but waited quietly until Katharine should intimate his dismissal. After a short pause she replied:—

"Nay, my Lord Cardinal, this gentleman is a trusty messenger from the Emperor. We will that you speak in his presence, that our nephew may the better understand how we are handled here; for it is doubtless the old affair of the divorce on which you would discourse."

"Ha! an agent of the Emperor!" said

the Cardinal, something like a sneer curling his lip, while an expression of mingled anger and disdain slightly flushed his face, and gave animation to the stillness of his heavy features. "He is the pupil of a wily and a crafty school, and doubtless well fitted for the mission on which he is sent." As he said this he fixed his eye with a keen and suspicious glance on Herman. Again bowing profoundly, he added, "But the will of your Grace is law, and I am bound to submit, although I would fain that the interests of England should not be discussed in the presence of its enemies."

"Speak on, my Lord Cardinal!" said the Queen, haughtily. "It is our pleasure to have this gentleman as a witness to what may be spoken between the Queen of England and his Eminence of York. We know well your errand is to urge our consent to this divorce, and will now tell you plainly that we also know the motives which have

prompted you in forming this plan. You seek revenge. You would annoy the Emperor, and thus avenge his having failed to aid your ambition to seize the Papal throne. *He* has offended you; and with a worthy, a magnanimous spirit, which does honour to your heart, you strike at him through us, an unoffending woman. Calling yourself a moral man, and a good Christian, the head of the law and the distributor of justice, you strive to undo what the law and the church have done; to separate husband and wife, put asunder those whom God hath joined together. Calling yourself a faithful servant of the Catholic church, aspiring to the triple crown, you seek to push me, the descendant of a race of kings, for ages its devoted adherents, — to force me from the throne of these realms, and to place thereon an enemy to its tenets, a convert to the heresy that denies its doctrines and would destroy its power."

While the Queen thus spoke with an energy, an eloquence even, (notwithstanding her foreign accent,) which the deep interest of the subject inspired, the Cardinal was evidently moved; his eye alternately fixed in earnest gaze on her face, while the colour was heightened on his own, or bent on the ground in deep thought.

"And to crown all, my Lord Cardinal," she continued, "calling yourself a prudent man,—above all, careful of your own interests, she whom you would place on the throne is your enemy. She owes you no good will; you have made her heart sad and sore by taking from her my Lord Percy, and she will not fail to requite you. I foresee and I warn you of the fate you have brought on yourself. You sought revenge. You have employed unworthy means to obtain it. You have set at nought the best interests of the master you serve, and the country you govern. You

have used the sacred trust committed to your hands but to gratify ambition and revenge, and the result will be your own destruction. Mistress Ann has beauty, and she lacks not wit; she will use them to good purpose. She will destroy you."

The Cardinal had shown surprise when the Queen first alluded to Ann Boleyn, but now his face expressed strangely mingled feelings of astonishment, doubt, fear, and anxiety, as he repeated, — "Mistress Ann! Mistress Boleyn! Is not your Grace jesting in supposing——"

"Jesting, my Lord Cardinal?" she exclaimed, flushing with anger, "Is the subject one of a nature so light or so merry that we should be jocose in speaking on it?"

"I crave pardon," he replied: "I meant not to offend your Highness. But if indeed the thoughts of Mistress Boleyn soar so high, it is meet that I take my measures accordingly."

"*If*," said Katharine, again interrupting him with something like a smile, and a singular softening of the harsh expression her features had hitherto borne, a flush of womanly spite and triumph colouring her pale cheeks at the evident discomfiture of her enemy—"*If*," my Lord Cardinal! Is the great statesman ignorant of the successful progress of his own plan to divorce the King and Queen? Does he not know how ably he has been aided therein by the good looks of Mistress Ann?"

"I beg leave to depart, your Highness," said the Cardinal, abruptly. "I will away to his majesty, and strive to turn away such evil thoughts." With a profound bow he retreated to the door, and hastily quitted the room.

Katharine was now again the gentle and gracious lady. Descending from her elevated position, she placed herself on a seat beside Herman, and pointing to another,

she said kindly, "Sit down, young sir. You look pale and fatigued, and I fear your wound pains you. Can we do aught to aid you?"

She then entered into conversation with him, asked many questions relative to the Emperor and his affairs, to whom she looked as a protector from the cruel injustice with which she was threatened by the brutal tyrant who then filled the English throne, and to whom unhappily she still clung as a wife, with a woman's fondness,—a woman's weakness we should have said, had she not been a mother, resolutely bent on suffering any extremity rather than consent to compromise the interests of her daughter. She made many inquiries, also, of Herman and his family, and for what reason they bore an assumed name, — all of which being answered, she drew from her finger a brilliant ring, presented it to him, and dismissed him with an assurance of her favour and protection.

Herman, well pleased to be liberated, almost immediately set off on his journey to Devonshire, this time attended by the rejoicing Fritz; whose zeal and fidelity being infinitely greater than his discretion, he had not hitherto been made acquainted with the change of name, nor the place of residence the family had chosen: but now the necessity for this mysterious secrecy had ceased; it mattered little now whether their real name were known or not.

Fritz and his master arrived safely at Fenton Manor, without accident or adventure, to the great joy of all parties, who had been long looking out for them. The only drawback to their felicity was the wound, which Herman had omitted to mention in his letter, and which sometimes painfully reminded him that laurels have thorns as well as roses. But a happy mind and the genial air of Devonshire's romantic coast

soon restored him to his accustomed health, and enabled him to join the now happy inmates of the Manor-house in daily excursions in the neighbourhood. Pleasure and prosperity reigned once again in the peaceful household.

Such is life! a stage whereon the constantly shifting scenes present alternately tragedy and comedy, a strangely chequered sky with sunshine and clouds in swift succession, — the blasting storm-wind, and the summer breeze.

They were now at liberty to return to their loved home, but it was agreed they should remain some time longer in this retreat, as beautiful though not so grand as the wild and picturesque district of their native mountains. In these cheerful domestic parties, the little Betta (the baby) made a distinguished figure. She was now nearly a year and half old, and could both walk and talk after a fashion of her own; and

her beauty and vivacity had made her the darling and the plaything of the whole house. No comments were made on the circumstance that the young peasant was clothed, attended, and looked like a little lady. It was evident the Countess regarded her with the fondest affection, and cherished her as a daughter. Herman and Gertrude sought not to pry into the mystery: perhaps they guessed the truth: certain it is they loved and treated her as a sister, and Blanche seemed to vie with them in affection for the lovely child.

These halcyon days, alas! brief as they were bright, were soon obscured by clouds, the slight but ill-boding harbingers of stormy and tempestuous times yet to come.

One morning that Lady Felsenberg was sauntering about the garden, while little Betta gambolled before her, the child fell and hurt herself. The lady anxiously caught her up to examine the injury she had

received. It was nothing serious; and greatly relieved, she looked up, and saw with surprise the eyes of a man whom she had not before noticed, fixed on her with a keen and earnest gaze, but immediately turned away, as he resumed the work with which he seemed to have been occupied.

At the moment she was struck with something strange and singular in the man's manner: but, occupied with the child, she did not dwell on it, and had soon forgotten it. Two days afterwards, she was again passing over a gravel walk in the same garden which led to the orchard: as she was about to pass through the door of the wall which separated them, she heard some persons speaking. There was something in the tones of the voice of one of them which startled her, and seemed to call up a chain of long-forgotten and unpleasant thoughts; and she went on slowly, looking for the speakers. Within the orchard were the

gardener and the man whom she had before seen. She now looked at him more attentively. As she approached, he turned away, and his face was half-hidden by a large hat which he wore; but she could see that his hair was gray, that he had lost an arm, and appeared to be bent with the decrepitude of age.

Struck with compassion, she gave him some money, which he received with humble and silent thankfulness, and turned to the gardener to inquire about him. The gardener said he had been recommended by the holy fathers of Fenmoor Abbey. "Father Jerome told me it would be a charity to employ him, and that I should find him as useful with his one arm as some people are with two; and, by the mass! it is the truth he spoke, madam." He continued, "'Tis surprising how handy he is, and his knowledge of herbs and simples is marvellous. Though his English is not the best, and I

am often puzzled to understand him, he helps me wonderfully well, and is a better workman than one would think to look at him. He hath, also, as the worthy father assured me, an excellent knack at selecting herbs and condiments for the seasoning of meats, and making savoury messes. So that Father Jerome would fain have employed him among the abbey kitcheners, but that he lacketh an arm, and that his health will not brook the heat of the great fires needful for the roastings."

The Countess passed on through the orchard to the heath, to look for the young party whose return she expected from a neighbouring village. The happy and laughing set soon made their appearance; they entered the house together, and sat down to a merry meal, during which a marine expedition was planned for the morrow. In order to have a long day, they arose early, and embarked with the first sun-

beams that sparkled on the waters of the bay.

Lady Felsenberg went with them only to the water's edge, and then slowly sauntered back to the cliffs, where, seating herself on a fragment of rock, she watched the little barque, as it lightly skimmed the placid surface of the sea, till it vanished from her sight. She was about to rise and quit the place, when she was again startled by the peculiar tones of the voice she had heard in the garden. She looked out from the rocky recess in which she was half-concealed, in expectation of seeing the gardener's mutilated assistant; but instead of him, two gray brothers of the Fenmoor Abbey slowly passed round a projecting headland, and close by her, apparently without seeing her, so earnestly were they occupied by their conversation, and which she thought related to the boat and its freight, for their eyes were turned

towards the sea; but the only words she caught were, "They are all there," from one of them, to which the other replied, "No, she is not with them."

The words were nothing. They were of ordinary import, and might have been uttered by any gossipping stranger. But the tones of the voice which had said, "*She* is not with them," made her start with terror, and involuntarily shrink into the recess in order to conceal herself from their sight. They passed, and were gone. She quitted her seat to hurry home, chased by a sort of phantom fear, raised by her imagination, which she could neither substantiate nor define; and which yet, notwithstanding its vagueness and its dimness, had sufficient power to make her heart sink with dismay.

She tried to reason with herself, and as she climbed the winding ascent of the cliffs, she said,—"Why may not men's voices

resemble each other as their faces frequently do? Is it not my own fancy which has created this resemblance?" And when she recollected that she fancied this similarity in two individuals wholly unlike each other, she slackened her hurried pace, and went on more quietly, murmuring, "It is my own imagination that deludes me. The man is in his grave. It cannot be *his* voice."

Still a sort of uneasy doubt, a restless, nervous irritability beset her. Something like a prophetic foreboding of ill depressed her spirits, and she rejoiced when the cheerful sounds of youthful voices again met her ear, and told her the young travellers by sea were returned. In the frolic, gaiety, and buoyant spirits of this happy set, time fled swiftly on. A whole week of calm enjoyment had nearly chased the panic from the mind of Lady Felsenberg, when the weather, which had hitherto been so bright and beautiful, gave gloomy indica-

tions of a change: dark heavy clouds congregating in vast masses obscured the sun, which set with fiery gleams, prematurely bringing on night. The sea-gulls fled clamorous and screaming to the land for shelter from the coming storm, foretold by the gusty blast that swept fitfully across the moaning sea.

At length it came. Gertrude and Blanche watched from the windows the beautiful but terrific flashes of lightning, quivering on the waves, and for a moment brightly lighting up the caverned rocks, and woody slopes of the coast, and the beach stretching far away. A crashing burst of thunder seemed to shake the very foundation of the house, then rolled in a solemn peal away, while a torrent of rain rushed like a water-spout down the shaking casements.

At this moment Lady Felsenberg entered the room, exclaiming, "Herman! my poor

Herman! There is no shelter on that wild moor he has to cross, if he returns by land —and if by water,"—suddenly pausing, she added, "Heaven forbid he should be on the water!"

Lights were now brought in, and the shutters closed, and they sat listening in silence to the howling wind, which now swept with fury round the house; when Herman, who had been absent the whole day, rushed in pale and agitated, exclaiming, as he cast a hurried glance around, "Thanks to the blessed Mary, you are all here!—all safe!"

"Safe! yes," said the Countess, "we are safe enough. It was for you we feared. You were exposed to the fury of the tempest. Go, change your clothes, Herman; the water is streaming from them; and you look as wild as if you had lost your wits. Even a soldier, I see, may be frightened at a clap of thunder," she added, laughing.

"Thunder!—the tempest!" he repeated. "No, I was not frightened by the tempest. I ——" he stopped.

"You *were* frightened," persisted his mother, gaily, relieved from her fears for his safety, and pleased to see him after his short absence. "You trembled. You are still pale as a ghost. Brave boy as thou art, thou wert shaking like a coward. Thou art inured to the thunder of war, but thou canst not stand the noise of

'Heaven's own artillery thundering in the skies.'

Go change thy dripping garments, and thy sorry countenance."

The young man heeded her not, but sat still on the seat on which he had thrown himself, silent and thoughtful; a sad and sorrowful expression gradually stealing over his features. Gertrude and Blanche anxiously watched him, and at length his mother appeared to share their anxiety.

The smile vanished from her lips, and the colour from her face; and laying a trembling hand on his arm, she said, "Something is wrong! Herman, tell me what it is."

"I have been vexed and annoyed," he replied, rising from his seat. "I will change my clothes and return to you." He quitted the room, and it was more than an hour ere he returned to it. As he closed the door, he said in a grave and melancholy tone, "I have been hesitating whether I should communicate the suspicion—the fear, by which my heart is oppressed. But reflecting that I cannot hope to guard you from the danger I apprehend, while you are ignorant of it, I will tell you, I fear, greatly fear, I was deceived, duped by a stratagem. I believe that De Sablons lives, that he is in this neighbourhood, that I have seen him in the dress of a priest."

The Countess sank back half-fainting and

motionless on her seat. The voice, that terrible voice, with its too well remembered tones, which had struck her with dismay, was now accounted for, and confirmed, beyond the possibility of doubt, that Herman's fears and suspicion were well founded. A mournful silence ensued, interrupted only by the pealing thunder and the rocking wind, now unheard or unheeded, in the more fearful tempest of terrible anticipation, raging in the minds of the unhappy inmates of the house over which it swept.

CHAPTER XIII.

The silence was at length broken by Lady Felsenberg, who said, in a gentle and subdued voice, "My foe still lives — my punishment is not yet complete — I have yet more to suffer. God's will be done! But tell me, Herman, how did you make this dreadful discovery?"

In answer to this question, he replied, "I was crossing the moor when the storm came on. Thinking I should be somewhat sheltered by the rocks, I descended to the beach by the Fenmoor valley to make my way home by the sea-shore. The sun had set when I reached it, but there was light enough to see a boat tossing on the waves, and vainly trying to reach the land. Two

men were in it. Once, as they were thrown nearly on shore, I heard an exclamation from one of them, which was replied to by a fierce execration from the other. I thought they were probably fishermen; and, anxious to aid them in a situation so perilous, I ventured into the foaming surf as far as I dared.

"While I thus stood half-buried in the waves, the boat again approached. I caught hold of it; and, propelled at the same time forward by the oars, it was rudely dashed on the strand. The two men fell from the sudden jerk, but were soon on their legs again, and I saw with surprise that they wore the peaceful dress of the cloister, but ill according with the fierce energy they displayed, and the strange oaths they uttered. They were well disguised, but greatly agitated by the danger they had escaped, and wholly off their guard. I thought I knew them both."

"De Sablons and Durochet?" said the Countess, faintly.

"Yes," replied Herman.

Another gloomy pause ensued, when a consultation was held on the best mode of counteracting the persevering villany of these men. But, wholly ignorant of their schemes, they could only decide on practising the most cautious vigilance, and that Lady Felsenberg should never quit the house without Herman, or a sufficient guard.

The next day a new discussion began. Many fresh conjectures were formed, and many expedients suggested, which ended as before in the fact that they could do nothing but wait and watch.

"At any rate," said Herman, "it would be something to ascertain where they have taken up their abode. From their dress, I am inclined to believe they are at Fenmoor Abbey: I will go and endeavour to learn if it be so."

"Blanche and I will go with you as far as the village, and wait till your return," said Gertrude.

As they descended the steps, little Betta met them, and, seeing them equipped for a walk, insisted on going with them. No objection was made; on the contrary, they were all pleased to have the merry little darling as an additional companion.

The Countess watched them as they departed, with a heart swelling with the mingled feelings of grief and affection. A sad foreboding fear, that the wretch to whom she had allied herself would ere long again separate her from them, depressed her spirits, and made her too restless to settle to any occupation, save that of watching for their return.

After an absence of between three and four hours they came back. She went out to meet them, and eagerly questioned Herman about the information he had obtained.

"Have you traced them?" she said. "What have you learned?"

"Nothing distinct or certain," he replied. "I could not ascertain whether they are among the brotherhood of the abbey; but their dress is the same."

As they entered the house together, she inquired, "Why did not Betta return with you? Where did you leave her?"

"Betta!" he said, surprised. "You would not allow her to go with us. You sent for her to come back."

"*I* sent—no," she uttered in a faint voice, the colour fading from her face.

"You sent her maid Hannah, to bring her back!" exclaimed Gertrude and Blanche, coming forward, and speaking together.

"Oh, Father of mercy, have pity on me!" she cried, sinking on her seat for a moment; then springing up she rushed out of the room. Scarcely a minute elapsed, and while those she left still stood in mute surprise and

consternation, she as suddenly flew back, wildly exclaiming, "She is gone! she is lost! The villain has got hold of her. My child! my child!"

She sank again on a seat, and burst into a fit of hysteric sobs and tears.

"Thank Heaven she can weep!" said Blanche, as they stood anxious around. "She will soon be calmer."

Blanche was right; she was soon more tranquil. She lay back quietly on the seat, showing no other signs of emotion than a heavy sigh which from time to time heaved her chest.

Herman, who had hitherto stood in melancholy silence beside her, now said, in a low and tremulous voice, "She is your daughter, mother? Betta is my sister?"

Lady Felsenberg raised her heavy and swollen eyelids, and looked up, but she did not speak.

"And this—this man is her father!"

said the unhappy young man, seating himself, overpowered by the strangely contending feelings by which he was agitated.

From the overwhelming effect of this discovery, it was evident he had never hitherto suspected the truth. He loved the beautiful and interesting child as a brother, or rather like a father, from the great disparity in their age, but without the slightest idea that she had a natural claim on his affection; and he now learned her near relationship to him with sensations of pain, vexation, and pleasure, so intimately blended that it was impossible to say which predominated. She was the daughter of a wretch. Her birth was a disgrace to them. A proud, an angry, a bitter feeling swelled in his heart. He turned away and stood aloof, with an expression of scorn and contempt on his face. But he thought of the engaging little creature. He looked at his unhappy mother, and that warm heart

led him again to her side, to soothe and to comfort her.

No upbraiding word passed his lips. Suppressing the vexation he could not but feel, he said gently and kindly, "Take courage, dear mother. We shall find our darling again. I loved her before. I shall love her still more now that I know she is my sister. Be sure we shall find and bring her back to her home."

The unhappy lady again raised her eyes to his face, and whispered as he bent over her, "Bless you, Herman!"

The group was now augmented by Barneck and Esther, who, privileged by long and faithful service, were considered rather as part of the family than as mere domestics. The evil tidings rapidly spread through the house, and created a general sorrow and indignation; for every one loved the merry Betta, and all vowed vengeance against the treacherous Hannah, who, it

was evident, had been a willing agent in her abduction. A general search was soon arranged, and many persons traversed the country in different directions, in order to trace the fugitive nurse-maid; but many days passed and no tidings were obtained.

At length news arrived that she had been seen on the road not far from Exeter; and Herman, with Fritz and a few armed attendants, departed in pursuit of her. The good monks from the abbey came with kind condolence, and offers of service, although probably not aware how near and dear was the tie which bound Madame Saint Amand to the lost child. Both Father Jerome and Father Rupert had been at the Manor-house on the morning of Herman's quitting it; Lady Felsenberg was therefore somewhat surprised at hearing on the evening of the same day that a monk from the abbey requested to see her.

Hoping however to obtain news of her

child, she readily admitted him, and eagerly advanced to meet him as he appeared at the entrance of her private room, where she had been sitting alone, weeping and wretched. The monk's cowl covered his face, and he carefully closed the door, and barred it ere he removed it. He then flung it back, and fixed his keen, bright eyes on her, who appeared half-paralyzed by their expression.

"So, madam," he said, with a smile of triumph, "I have found you once again! You are doubtless rejoiced to see your husband?"

The once high spirit of the poor lady was now quite subdued, and she said meekly, "Tell me what you have done with the little girl, and on what terms you will consent to restore her to us."

"I will not affect ignorance of your meaning," he replied. "I acknowledge she is in my power. But before I answer your questions, you must reply to mine. What

interest have you in this child? and who are her parents?"

She hesitated. At length she said, "We are all greatly attached to her—she is an orphan."

"An orphan!" he repeated. "This is fortunate for my plan."

"Your plan? you will not encumber yourself with a child—a girl?"

"A girl—an orphan girl. It is what I have long been seeking, and have now found. She is handsome, too, and resembles you; these are additional advantages," he said, with a malicious smile.

"For what purpose have you entrapped her? and what will you do with her?" anxiously inquired the mother. "Tell me at once on what terms you will consent to restore her to us."

He gazed silently for some time on her pale and agitated face, and then said with a bitter sneer, "You appear to be greatly

interested in the fate of this orphan. If she were your daughter you could scarcely be more so. I will tell you my purpose. You will then see that I cannot consent to restore her to you, much as I might desire to comply with the wishes of a lady to whom I am bound by so many gentle ties. It has been your pleasure to renounce me and deny my claims on you. You reject me as a husband, — deny me the sweet endearing caresses of a wife. My hours are lonely and forlorn. I must have some one to love and comfort me. I shall rear this child to know no other, to love no other than myself. I will keep her ignorant of the cursed arts of your capricious sex. In ten or twelve years she will be entering on womanhood, when I shall make her my wife."

A deep silence followed the conclusion of this speech, during which the poor lady stood pale and trembling. At last she repeated faintly, "Your wife!"

"Yes. She will be to me what you once were. She will not wantonly break the solemn oath she will register at the altar—she will not outrage and defy her husband, as you have done."

"Your wife!" again repeated the wretched mother. "*Your* wife—man, man! She is—she is your daughter!"

"Ah! indeed!" he said, with a calm sarcastic smile, "She is my daughter? my right to detain her is then unquestioned. Yes, madam, I know she is my daughter. I watched you, I saw you unseen, I could not long doubt that she was *your* child. From her age I also believed she was *mine*. I shall teach her to regard me as her only friend. Teach her to abhor and despise the cruel, the unnatural mother who has branded her birth as illegitimate, and driven her from the place in society she had a right to claim."

"Tell me! tell me, De Sablons!" ex-

claimed the Countess almost gasping for breath, "By the blessed Mary, tell me, what is the price at which you will consent to restore her to me. I will no longer defy you. I submit. I will obey you; but oh, restore my child!"

"'Tis well, madam!" he replied sternly. "It would have been better for you had you done so long ago, ere hatred and revenge ——" He checked himself, and bent his eyes to the ground, as if to hide the hard and cruel feelings they expressed.

"What I require is a positive and unequivocal acknowledgment of the marriage, and the birth of my daughter. I have here a paper properly drawn up: you have only to sign it yourself, and let the two servants who were present at the marriage do the same. I will return again to claim it. The child shall come with me. On receiving this paper so signed I leave her with you. Now I warn you, madam, not

again to rouse the bitter feelings of my heart by an attempt to thwart, or control me by secret or underhand means. Do not hope to circumvent my plans. Be sure they are too well arranged to offer you a chance of success. The only safe game you can play is unqualified submission. Dare again to disobey, and you risk the destruction of all that are dear to you."

"But will you not say," she inquired, "when I—when you will bring ——"

"Say, when I will return, that you may have people ready to rescue the child; that you may marshal your troops, summon the guard that was left to protect you from my approach. You see how well they execute their task," he said maliciously. "No, I will choose my time to come again, as I have done now: wait, and expect me soon." He now unfastened the door and departed.

For some time after he was gone she sat silent and motionless, mechanically

looking on the paper he had left, but without noticing its contents. At length, with a heavy sigh, she said, "God has taught me that the path of falsehood is an evil path, whatever be the motives that lead us to it."

She was about to leave the room when Blanche rushed in with a frightened face, exclaiming, "That monk—that gray brother was ——"

"De Sablons!" said Lady Felsenberg. "You know it! you have seen him?"

"Yes," she replied in a low sad tone, as she left Blanche to her own reflections.

Herman meantime, with his small but trusty band, pursued his course towards Exeter: but in vain he sought to trace the fugitives. Led on from place to place by false reports, and purposely misled, he at length abandoned the pursuit in despair, and resolved to return. Towards evening of the fourth day from his leaving home, he again

found himself in the Fenmoor valley. Once more he quitted his horse to make inquiries at the abbey, at the farm, and the hamlet, with the same want of success; and descended to the beach to make his way home by the serpentine ascent of the cliffs.

The sun was setting as he reached the sands, throwing a golden gleam upon the waters of the ocean, upon the fading woods, and many-coloured rocks; the tide rolling its long waves into the bay with a gentle lulling monotony of sound, that seemed to soothe the vexed and weary traveller. He seated himself on a fragment of rock midway on the ascent, to rest. "The gorgeous mantle of the setting sun," with its glowing tints of saffron and purple, gradually changed to the hazy twilight. The cheerful sounds of day gave place to the "beetle's drony flight," and the "drowsy tinklings of the distant folds." Herman sank into one of those reveries in which the mind is most

apt to indulge when the limbs are weary. The strange scenes he had witnessed, the many and singular vicissitudes from joy to sorrow which he had experienced, young as he was, came in succession to his memory, and none with more forcible effect than those in which Blanche bore a part. He had loved her fondly. He still loved her. He could not drive the past from his mind: but it was a subject that created sad and sore feelings in his heart.

While he thus sat mournfully ruminating on his vanished hopes, heightening and augumenting in value (as man ever does) that which is unattainable, picturing to himself that life of bliss unalloyed he had looked forward to with the gentle, affectionate, and lovely Blanche for his wife, the chimes from the abbey announced that the curfew would soon sound, and he arose to go. He mounted, and was within a few yards of the moor on the summit of the

cliff, when he again seated himself lingering and reluctant to meet his mother with the tale of the useless efforts and ill success of his expedition.

He had scarcely seated himself a second time when the words, "Hush! listen!" caught his ear. He looked up: two figures were dimly visible on the verge of the cliff. One of them resembled his mother. The night was so still that he heard the rustling of a silken garment. It must be his mother. He was about to speak, when one of them said, "Now! now!" an exclamation followed; a sound succeeded like the lifting a heavy weight; it was flung over the cliff, and fell with a dull lumping sound on the beach below; and all was still again.

Herman stood half-paralyzed: he knew not why, but he trembled. He feared he scarcely knew what; but a deep and terrible presentiment of ill possessed his mind, and seemed to crush his heart. A

frightful, a horrible idea had seized his imagination, and seemed to cling to it with determined tenacity, wild and improbable as it was.

Though all was still, the sound of that dull heavy weight yet echoed in his ear. *He knew the sound:* he had heard it before. Desperately he threw himself down the rocks and stood beside the object thrown down.

His ear had not deceived him. It was a corpse; the body of a man, clothed in the monastic dress. The red cross on the gray frock, faintly distinguishable in the fading light, indicated a member of the brotherhood of Franciscan Friars. The face was mutilated and disfigured. He could not certainly say what name that man had borne while living, but he believed he knew it; and again the same terrible train of thought rushed through his brain. An icy chill crept through his veins as he stood silent beside it as if rivetted to the spot.

Why should the sight of a dead body so affect him? He was a soldier, whose business is to kill. He had seen thousands of dead men, — battle-fields covered with the dead and dying; and he had not shrunk as he did now from this one solitary corpse. No: war is open, daylight assassination; but from secret, stealthy, midnight murder, even the soldier shrinks.

He was roused from his fearful trance by the sound of voices, and approaching footsteps. He started as if waking from an oppressive dream, and fled impulsively as if he hoped by flight to get rid of the fearful phantom that pursued him. After a time he became more tranquil, and once again began to ascend the winding path; soliloquizing as he climbed, "No, no, it is not —cannot be. It is impossible! Besides, the voices were hoarse and deep. My mother's voice is clear and gentle. No, no, it is impossible," he repeated again, as he

approached the house with a lightened heart. "It is my wearied frame and heated imagination that present these frightful images to me."

As he uttered these words in a cheerful tone, he entered the house; but as Esther met him, and he inquired for his mother, his voice sounded husky and nearly inaudible.

"My lady was unwell, and went to bed early," she replied. "The young ladies retired also as soon as they had supped. Will you please to have your supper sent to your own room? It is ready. Fritz and the men are come back, and said you would be here directly."

He made no reply to her question, but walked on mechanically towards the parlour where they usually sat, repeating to himself the only words which had made an impression on his preoccupied mind, "She went to bed early. She was indisposed, and

went to bed early. The blessed saints be praised!"

Esther opened the parlour door, but instantly closed it again, while a half suppressed exclamation seemed to break involuntarily from her lips. Turning to Herman, she said, "I am sure, sir, you had better go to your own room at once, and I will send your supper there."

He did not speak, but pushing her hand from the lock, he opened the door and entered.

CHAPTER XIV.

In the middle of the room sat his mother, upright and still. She showed no surprise at the sight of him, nor did she question him as to the result of his search. She looked up at his approach, but it was with a vague and wandering glance that scarcely seemed to recognise him. And he — he had not courage to question *her*.

"Good Heaven, my lady!" exclaimed Esther, "why did you get up again? You promised me you would not come down again."

"I have not been in bed," she replied. "I told you I would not go to bed."

"Mother!" said Herman.

The sound of his voice appeared to rouse her; she again looked up, and feebly uttering, "Herman, my son! Herman is come back to me. Heaven has still pity on me. I thought, I feared ——"

"What did you think? What did you fear?"

"I hardly know now," she said, putting her hand to her head. "But I think it was, that Heaven was to punish me by taking away my children; that I was never to see you again, nor Gertrude, nor Blanche, nor—nor the little one; nor the little one," she repeated, bursting into tears and sobs.

"The saints be praised! the tears are come at last!" exclaimed Esther as she listened to the peculiarly melancholy sound of the lady's hysterical cries.

"No tidings have then been heard of the child!" he said, turning to Esther; and now for the first time looking at her, he observed

that her face was pale and haggard, as if she had recently undergone great fright or fatigue, or both combined.

"Yes," she replied; "she is here. She was brought back by—by a monk."

"Why did you not tell me this before?" he said, surprised at this intelligence.

"I—I forgot it," she replied with a disturbed and embarrassed air. "They found her asleep I think. My lady will tell you when she is better; but she must go to bed now."

Lady Felsenberg now lay back on her seat still and exhausted, and Herman now first saw that the room presented a scene of strange disorder. The rushes, which commonly strewed the floor in an even uniform covering, were now driven up in heaps, leaving it in places bare; they were scattered on the tables and seats, some of which were upset, and one was broken. This was the more remarkable, because the lady was

very precise in the arrangement of her rooms. The green rushes in summer, the dry ones in winter, interspersed with lavender, rosemary, and other sweet-scented herbs, were frequently changed, and no dogs were allowed to gnaw bones beneath the table.

He noticed the confusion which reigned around, but he asked no questions.

His attention was now again drawn to his mother, who, raising herself up in the seat, said with a deep sigh, "Oh that I had listened to thy counsel, Herman, my truest, my best friend! Then had I never abandoned the safe path of honesty and truth—never entered the crooked labyrinth of falsehood, which has led me on to misery, to——"

Ere she had time to finish the sentence, Esther impetuously interrupted her with, "My lady, you must not talk any more. You must go to bed."

Angrily turning to Herman, she said,

"Don't talk to her, sir! you make her ill! She does not know now what she says. Go away, and leave her. Go, go!" she added, pushing him towards the door.

The unhappy young man showed no anger at this assumption of authority on the part of a domestic. Alas! no. He knew too well the faithful devotion of Esther to her mistress. He understood too clearly the fears that made her so anxious to get rid of him, and he obeyed; but ere he quitted the room he said, "Shall I not first aid you to remove her to her chamber? Is it not better that I, rather than another, should assist you?"

"No, no," she said impatiently. "Leave us, sir! she will be able to walk by and by."

He went to his chamber; not to his supper, not to his bed. The weary and hungry traveller no longer thought of food or repose. With a heavy heart, and restless step, he traversed the room for hours; a train

of harassing ideas constantly pressing on his hot and weary brain. In vain he tried to hope he had deceived himself; in vain he repeated to himself, I have seen nothing, know nothing positive, or absolutely conclusive. His reason gave the lie to this sophistry of fear and affection. A chain of concurring circumstances told him the fearful fact, that his gentle, his affectionate and dearly loved mother, was—his heart recoiled at the thought, his lips refused to utter the words that would be attached to her name, when all he guessed should be known to others, — to those who had no wish, no motive, to screen her from the disgrace and punishment she had drawn down on her own head, and through her on her family.

Fortunately it is the nature of violent emotion quickly to exhaust itself. The terrible agitation of the last few hours by which Herman had been tortured,

wearied out the morbid activity of the excited brain, and was succeeded by the torpor of complete repose. He threw himself on his bed, and sank into a profound sleep.

When he awoke the sun was high in the heavens. He started up with a sort of indistinct idea that something terrible had occurred, — that his mother was in danger, and needed his aid. Hastily he sprang from the bed, and began to descend the stairs. But soon the events of the preceding day came to his memory, and he paused a moment to think, ere he joined the other members of the family.

Gertrude and Blanche were eagerly watching for him, and little Betta ran joyfully to meet him, holding out her arms, and begging to be taken up. He raised and caressed her affectionately, not sorry thus to hide his face from observation. But he had forgotten his dusty and stained dress,

which had not been changed since his return. He accounted for that, and his pallid face, by some plausible pretext, which at least partially satisfied the inquiries they occasioned.

He saw, by the cheerful faces of the two girls, that the fearful secret which oppressed his own heart was by them wholly unsuspected. They told him that Betta had been brought back by one of the Monks of Fenmoor Abbey, who had found her asleep on the heath. The child's sleep was so profound that it was thought she must have taken some narcotic drug. This was the account Esther gave of the affair. Of Hannah no tidings had been heard.

The Countess was said to be indisposed, and did not leave her chamber. Esther, in close attendance on her, was little seen by the other inmates of the house. Herman, weighed down by grief, and fears he could not suppress and would not communicate,

avoided his young companions. The heavy hours crept slowly on; the day wore gloomily away. A second came and went. A melancholy quietude seemed to reign throughout the household. Something seemed wrong, though no one knew what. Spite of Herman's efforts to conceal his feelings and his thoughts, the keen eyes of affection by which he was watched could not be wholly blinded. Blanche and Gertrude both saw that he was suffering either in body or mind. His appetite was gone; he was silent, spiritless, and dejected.

The news had been brought by a peasant, that one of the monks of Fenmoor Abbey had fallen over the cliff, and been found dead on the beach. Then came another version of the tale. It was not a monk, but a stranger in disguise, who had been killed, which was discovered on his being carried to the Abbey hospital. A third tale said, suspicions had arisen that the stranger

had been murdered, and flung over the cliff by the assassins. The rumours varied and changed, till at length they assumed a form that astonished the ears of those who listened to them, and were alluded to by the inmates of the Manor-house only in half words, hints, and whispers; implicating, as they did, some of the members of the family, spreading gloom and consternation throughout the household, which had lately been considerably augmented.

Early on the morning of the third day after Herman's return from Exeter, Father Rupert arrived with a somewhat hurried manner, which was very unusual to the serene and gentle-minded monk. The visits of the good and pious man were always welcome at Fenton Manor: but now that this strange and gloomy mystery seemed to overshadow it, his presence was hailed with double joy. But the placid expression his face commonly wore had

given place to a disturbed and agitated one. After a hasty greeting to the young people, he retired with Lady Felsenberg. The conference did not last long; he soon quitted her; and, meeting Herman, who was anxiously watching for him, he said, "It is needful that Madame Saint Amand quit this place without delay. Her safety requires it. The officers of justice will be here anon, and——"

"My unhappy mother!" exclaimed Herman, interrupting him. "It is then so—she has confessed that——"

"Young man!" said Father Rupert, somewhat sternly breaking in on the question he was about to ask, "Seek not to dive into secrets confided to the ministers of the Church. It is sufficient for thee to know thou must provide for the removal of thy mother. Here she may not remain. God, who knows the motives of men's actions, will judge and punish those who

sin, with a measure proportioned to the offence. Man's judgment is erring. He cannot see the heart of the accused. The justice of man, awarded by human tribunals, is often greatly disproportioned to the crime, and justice but in name. Thy mother must away. Alack! I do fear it is even now too late."

Herman's eye involuntarily followed his earnest gaze, and saw, from the window, Father Jerome mounted on a mule, shambling along the road which led to the house, at a speed most extraordinary for a member of the quiet fraternity to which he belonged, by no means renowned for their horsemanship. Scarcely had the steaming mule clattered into the court-yard ere Father Jerome was off the saddle, and in the room, exclaiming, as he wiped the sweat from his face, "By the blessed rood, I have not had so fierce a course since the outlaws chased me in the forest valley.

They come, they come! Sir Wilfred Sumner with his posse are at hand, with a warrant to arrest Madame Saint Amand and her son. A stranger hath deposed to certain facts that implicate them in the death of a man who was found on the beach. I have not spared the spur, as my poor mule well knoweth, that I might warn the good lady, who hath ever been kind to the needy, and a friend to the Church."

A hasty consultation was now held, and it was quickly decided that the best plan to pursue was, to seek concealment for the lady and her son within the domain, since to quit its walls now would only be to throw themselves into the hands of those they wished to avoid. A root-house in the orchard, adjoining the wood-yard, half filled with sticks and garden tools, was selected as a safe place; and to this they retreated. Scarcely was this plan settled, and before it could be executed, a thundering summons

for admittance sounded at the gates, which had been hastily closed for the purpose of delay.

Gertrude and Blanche, who had hitherto remained in ignorance of what was passing, now roused by the noise and bustle so unusual in the quiet household, rushed forth to inquire its cause, and met Herman carrying, rather than leading, his mother down the stairs. A few hurried words only were exchanged between them, serving but to perplex and terrify them.

Pale and frightened, they entered the parlour, and were greatly rejoiced to see the two priests among a number of strange men, by whom it was occupied. "It is said they have departed; they are not here," said Father Jerome to the magistrate, at the moment they reached the entrance to the room, and on seeing it so filled were about to retreat again, when he advanced and whispered, "Courage, my

children! Help us to gain time." He then said aloud to Gertrude, "I would fain beg thy hospitality, daughter. It is nigh unto noon, and many hours since I have eaten. I pray thee let thy people serve us a meal as quickly as may be."

As they went off to obey his request, he followed them, and said hastily, in a low and earnest tone, "Meat and drink! — meat and drink for them all! the best you have, quickly, and no stint."

Returning to the magistrate, he said jocosely, "I crave your worship's pardon; but my empty bowels do so yearn for the flesh-pots of Egypt, that I may scantly think of aught else until they be satisfied. This house hath a name for an honest hospitality; will it not be well for your worship also to refresh yourself after your long ride?"

The cunning monk knew his man; and so readily had his hint been taken, and

his plan carried out, that the plump and jolly Justice found himself almost immediately seated before a well-covered table, with the two priests, while his attendant satellites were regaling with the servants; notwithstanding his protestations that he must first search the premises.

The unhappy old Barneck and the anxious Fritz took good care their guests should not ask twice for any thing, more especially for strong ale, which, as Fritz said, "hath a marvellous power to make a man forget that which you do not wish him to remember." Father Jerome played his part of deputy-host at the social board so well that, after sitting nearly two hours, the contented Justice, declaring he was a right worthy priest, and a pleasant companion withal, rose to make the necessary search for the culprits. This he executed with the staid gravity becoming his official dignity, only making two small

mistakes; once in graciously patting the head of a beer firkin, which he mistook for a child, and next, ordering, in a tone of stern authority, a fagot in the wood-yard to be brought before him for examination, declaring it to be a man "of a most ferocious mien, and armed with weapons of destruction."

Being at length convinced that the object which had attracted his attention was not so dangerous as he thought, he departed with his men, happily just able to find their way back by the road they had come. Father Jerome, in a most funny and facetious mood, not altogether, perhaps, in strict accordance with his clerical garments, went to announce to the prisoners their departure; giving it as his opinion that no farther steps would be taken in the affair by Sir Wilfred Sumner, who had protested, as he swallowed the stirrup cup on mounting his horse in the court-yard, that it was

"altogether a foolish idea to suppose any thing could be wrong in such a well-ordered household."

Notwithstanding this friendly disposition of the magistrate, Father Jerome recommended that the gates should be closed, and a watch kept from the windows. With this advice he and Father Rupert now also quitted the house.

The family again assembled, and, no longer checked by the presence of strangers, Gertrude exclaimed, "Do tell me what all this means? What did these men seek? and why was it necessary for you to conceal yourselves? This is some new stratagem of De Sablons, I suppose."

For some time no one spoke; at length Herman replied, in a low voice, "No: De Sablons is dead."

"Dead!—not he. He made you believe that before. Depend on it, you will soon

see him in some fresh disguise. It is a part of some new plan."

"De Sablons is dead, Gertrude," repeated Herman. "He was found lifeless on the beach by Durochet. These men came for the purpose of compelling us to give evidence on the subject, which we were unwilling to do."

"Ah!" she said, surprised, "*He* then was the man who was said to be murdered? and Durochet found him? I dare say it was Durochet who destroyed him. They quarrelled, and he killed him. They often quarrelled. Yes, yes, *he* killed him. Don't you think so, mother?"

Lady Felsenberg made no reply, but hid her face by leaning on the table, near which she sat.

"Well," said Gertrude, "at any rate his death is a happy deliverance from the fear and anxiety in which we have so long lived.

My mother,—all of us, will now be tranquil and happy. We have nothing more to dread."

It was now Herman's turn to cover his face, while his mother, shaking with uncontrollable emotion, rose from her seat, and with an unsteady step quitted the room. A short pause of silence ensued, when Gertrude spoke again in a low and mournful tone, "My poor mother! she loved this wretch — she still regrets his loss."

"Regret *his* loss?" said Herman, surprised. "Why do you think so?"

"Ah, Herman, you would not have asked that question," she replied gravely, "if you had seen her melancholy face as she left the room."

For nearly a month after this agitating day, they lived in gloomy tranquillity, unbroken save by the visits of Fathers Jerome and Rupert, and the ordinary occurrences which slightly relieve the monotonous uniformity of a country life. But this peace

and repose was not satisfactory. There seemed a something false and hollow in it, which the two young women could not well understand.

The gay Gertrude, who had hoped now to have seen something like happiness and mirth restored, and to have indulged herself occasionally as of old in laughing and making others laugh, was far more inclined to weep. For Herman looked ill and unhappy, and the only time her mother wore a cheerful face was at the approach of Father Rupert, whose visits were now frequent and long.

The fourth week had calmly succeeded the third since the bustle and tumult occasioned by the judicial search, when their repose was again broken up, and sunshine again gave place to storm in their chequered life.

A peasant came with intelligence that a stranger and a traveller was lying bruised

and half senseless at an ale-house in a neighbouring hamlet, having been thrown from his horse and much hurt on the head; so that they had been unable to ascertain who he was or from whence he came. But from the circumstance of his having once or twice uttered the words "Fenton Manor," they thought it best to let Madame Saint Amand know it. On hearing this account, Herman determined to return with the messenger. The distance across the moor being little more than three miles, they set off together on foot.

He found the unknown traveller not now restless and irritable as he had been, but sunk in a quiet torpor of the senses, from which they were unable to rouse him; but on searching him they discovered a letter addressed to Herman. It was from the good Queen Katharine, to the following effect:—

"Young Sir,—It hath come to our knowledge that a French messenger has arrived with instructions to arrest the Lady your mother, yourself, and the other members of the family, on the plea of some great harm done to a subject of the French king.

"Whether or no this be a stratagem of my Lord Cardinal of York, (who hath set his seal to the order,) the better to rid himself of your presence, whom he mislikes, as one well thought of by us and our nephew the Emperor; this we know not: but lest this evil come upon you suddenly, and without warning, we send off a trusty man, who hath orders to spur and spare not; so that, God willing, this shall reach your hand twenty-four hours before the warrant-bearers can be with you.

"We can give you no farther counsel, being well-nigh distraught with our own troubles: but heartily commending you to

the protection of God and his holy saints, we remain your friend to serve you.

"KATHARINE, the Queen."

Astonished at the information so kindly conveyed to him, Herman had but little time to reflect on the strange turn this disastrous affair had now taken; none to waste on useless speculations. Action the most prompt and decided was necessary. The accident to the messenger, who should have delivered the letter, had occurred on the preceding day, consequently the time the gentle-hearted lady hoped to have gained was lost, and the officers of justice might be expected every hour. As this idea presented itself, he eagerly inquired if a horse could be had, and was told the one from which the messenger had been thrown was in the stable. To saddle it, mount, and gallop off, (after commending the messenger to the care of the host,) was the work of a minute.

He had sprang up the steep ascent which led to the moor, and was dashing across it, when a shout aroused him from a perplexing train of thought. He reined up the horse just in time to prevent his going over a man who appeared anxious to stop him. It was Barneck, pale. weary, and dejected.

END OF VOLUME FIRST.

EDINBURGH:
Printed by William Tait, 107, Prince's Street.

3 0112 056503805